

Russia's Sputnik V is 91.6% effective against Covid-19

The Russian-developed Sputnik V vaccine has been found to be 91.6 per cent effective against Covid-19, according to a study published in the medical journal *The Lancet* on Tuesday. The peer-reviewed result comes from a phase-3 clinical trial conducted in the Russian capital Moscow by the Gamaleya Institute, the body that developed the vaccine. For the study, 19,866 volunteers were given either two doses of the Sputnik V vaccine or a placebo. — dpa



P11

IMPRESSIVE OSAKA, BARTY MAKE WINNING START



P13

MOVE TO ENHANCE AL MAZYUNAH FREE ZONE'S INVESTMENT APPEAL



P18

BASKING IN THE SUN ON JABAL SHAMS



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable on the death of Princess Tarfa bint Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud. In his cable, King Salman expressed his thanks for His Majesty's sincere condolences and sympathy, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty against all harms. — ONA

DELAY DECISION ON FEE HIKE FOR LICENCES

The recent decision to raise fees for work permits of expatriates by the Ministry of Labour will burden the private sector companies and also negatively affect the local economy, the OCCI chairman said. He sought to postpone the decision for some time. Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Directors, OCCI, said that the decision will incur big losses to business owners, which will ultimately raise the cost of goods and services. The ministry announced that there will be an increase in fees to recruit and new licences to bring in expatriate manpower in some professions. **DETAILS ON P2**



SNOW-LIKE PLANT IN DHOFAR



It is for the botanists to decide whether a flower species found in the interiors of Dhofar is Snow Plant or some other species very close to it. The plant attracted the attention of some plantmen during their random trip to Ayn Ayoon. Since they had seen the original Snow Plant, they were confused as to how this rare and protected plant is available in abundance in a particular area. **DETAILS ON P2**

Human rights commission says dealt with 70 cases in 2020

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) dealt with 70 issues in 2020, forty of which were monitored by the commission itself, while 30 were reported to it, according to a statement issued on Tuesday.

The issues varied from physical safety to legal assistance, prisons, proper housing, family care, and workers' issues. Monitoring and receiving human rights cases is one of the core competencies of the OHRC.

Monitoring of human rights issues is done through field visits, following published articles in

Monitoring of human rights issues is done through field visits, following published articles in media or on social networking sites

OHRC REPORT

the media or on social networking sites. The commission also receives reports and complaints from individuals and deals with them with confidentiality and privacy as details of the persons

OMAN VISION 2040 TO SPUR GROWTH

IMF SAYS ECONOMY PROJECTED TO GROW 1.8% THIS YEAR

MAJID AL HATTALI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

The Sultanate has good indicators for economic growth with the Oman Future Vision 2040.

This was confirmed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation, which held consultations with the Sultanate's government represented by the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

GOOD INDICATORS

Dr Mahmoud Mohiedin, Executive Director of the (IMF), said that the IMF's delegation confirmed the presence of good indicators for the Sultanate compared to before particularly with Vision 2040.

This was stated at a virtual economic council organised by the Oman Economic Association (OEA) in which it hosted the IMF executive director.

Oil hits 1-year high at \$57

LONDON: A US snowstorm pushed crude oil prices to pre-pandemic levels on Tuesday, while global stocks extended rallies on hopes for more US fiscal stimulus.

New York oil prices surged on the back of upbeat market sentiment and a snowstorm that socked the northeastern United States. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate oil soared to \$54.94 per barrel, while Brent North Sea crude hit \$57.78, a level last reached nearly a year ago.

Dr Khlaid bin Said al Amri, Chairman of the board of directors of OEA, mediated the session. The IMF official said the Sultanate's economy contracted by 6.4 per cent the previous year

due to sharp fall in international crude oil prices and the impact of Covid-19.

He added that Oman's economy is projected to grow 1.8 per cent this year after earlier reports expected a 0.5 per cent drop, noting that inflation is under control.

The IMF official stated that the Medium-Term Fiscal Balance Plan will enable the Sultanate to achieve sustainable development goals as well as the strategic objectives of the Oman Future Vision 2040.

ECONOMIC GRAVITY

The Sultanate boasts a unique position which allows it to be at the forefront of the logistics sector which is expected to see large investments specially after the world's centre of economic gravity had shifted from West to East like China, Korea, India and other East Asian countries.

Need to Omanise senior positions in banks

MUSCAT: The office of Majlis Ash'shura discussed a number of topics at a meeting held on Tuesday including a message from the Council of Ministers regarding a visual display by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on the economic impact of the agreement the Sultanate had signed with other countries and economic organisations.

MONITORING TOOLS

The office reviewed some draft laws including amendments of Articles (20, 21) of the Advocacy Law. It also discussed a number of monitoring tools stated by the Council of Oman Law.

The office looked into the issue of the nationalisation of senior positions at the banking and finance sector as some members of Majlis Ash'shura stated their desire for the importance of having national leaders alongside international executives. The office decided to refer the matter to the Youth and Human Resources Committee for study.

The office discussed a desire for approving Arabic language as the official language to be used by...

TURN TO P2

Breast cancer overtakes lung as most common cancer

GENEVA: Breast cancer has overtaken lung cancer as the most common form of the disease, accounting for nearly 12 per cent of new cases each year worldwide, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

"For the first time, breast cancer now constitutes the most

commonly occurring cancer globally", Andre Ilbawi, a cancer specialist at the WHO, told a UN briefing ahead of World Cancer Day on Thursday.

Lung cancer was the most common type for the last two decades, but is now in second place, ahead of colorectal cancer, which is the



third most widespread, Ilbawi said. An estimated 2.3 million new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed last year, representing 11.7 per cent of all cancer cases, the WHO said in a statement. "Among women, breast cancer is the most commonly-diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of

cancer death worldwide", it said.

Ilbawi noted that obesity in women was a common risk factor in breast cancer, and is also driving overall cancer numbers. As the global population grows and life expectancy increases, cancer is expected to become more common. — AFP



OMAN STRANDING NETWORK SEEKS HELP TO SAVE WHALES

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 2

A dedicated team of specialists and volunteers from the Oman Stranding Network recently completed a successful rescue of an entangled Arabian Sea Humpback Whale that had become stranded off the coast of Duqm early last week. Specialists from the Environment Authority (EA), Five Oceans Environmental Services, and Future Seas, supported by the Environment Society (ESO) and the Port of Duqm, were quickly dispatched to undertake the complicated rescue effort.

Serving as a stark reminder of the dangers of abandoned fishing gear to the marine environment, which the EA and ESO continue to highlight, the whale was found and

confirmed safe and well. Much like a human fingerprint, the markings on the tail fluke and dorsal fins on humpback whales are unique to that individual and helps researchers identify resightings. Photographs and videos taken of the whale have now been compared with the Oman cetacean Photo-ID database and it has been identified as OM11-016.

"Arabian Sea Humpback Whales are the only non-migratory species of humpback whales and they are endemic to the Arabian Sea. Unfortunately, we estimate that there are less than 100 of its kind, so every individual is even more precious if they are to have a future. At ESO we remain committed to educating and advocating for the adoption of practices that can better protect our fragile marine environment," said Suaad al Harthi, Executive Director at ESO.

"We would like to express our



**Arabian Sea
Humpback
Whales are
the only non-
migratory species
of humpback
whales and they
are endemic to the
Arabian Sea**

**SUAAD AL
HARTHI**

Executive Director at ESO

sincere thanks to the dedicated team of specialists who worked under the guidance of the International Whaling Commission's Entanglement Response Network, and to the Port of Duqm, the Royal Oman Police Coastguard and the Royal Air Force of Oman who all supported this effort. Without them this mission wouldn't have been a success," she added.

The objective of an entanglement response is to remove all detrimental entangling gear safely from the whale, along with learning as much as possible from the entanglement to raise awareness on conservation actions designed to mitigate future incidents. Andy Willson, Founder of Future Seas and a member of the rescue team, said, "This mission was a great example of the collaborative partnership we have formed in Oman

to support incidents of stranding and entanglement of our marine wildlife. Under the leadership of the Environment Authority, the Oman Stranding Network is committed to ensuring that we have the knowledge and expertise to respond to such incidents. However, we cannot do this alone and we need the support of companies and individuals in Oman to help support our work through sponsorship and donations that support the logistics of our fieldwork. I would encourage anyone interested in supporting Oman's conservation efforts to support Arabian Sea Humpback Whales to get in touch with ESO."

Incidents of stranding for marine mammals can be reported to the Environment Authority's dedicated hotline 80071999 or to ESO via any of their SM channels.

Oman Airports team achieves global accreditation

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 2

As a testament to the operational strategy adopted by Oman Airports in human resources development and engaging employees in international training programmes, six employees of the Oman Airports team obtained the Airport Management Professional Accreditation Programme (AMPAP) by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Airports Council International (ACI). This achievement reaffirms the company's commitment to improving the performance of its employees, increasing operational efficiency in airport operations

and management, as well as enhancing the company's strategy in investing in human capital and enhancing the overall aviation sector in the Sultanate.

On this occasion, Abdullah bin Saleh al Yafai, Vice-President of Support Services Unit at Oman Airports, lauded the efforts of the six employees on their accomplishment, which rather highlights their dedication and for providing solutions related to airport management, noting that this programme is one of the most prominent training programmes that contribute towards upskilling employees in several administrative, financial and operational positions.

"Oman Airports is constantly



looking to upskill its employees in order to keep pace with the latest developments in airport management so that they are well-poised to become future leaders in operating and managing airports in the Sultanate." He further pointed out that the company is

continuously striving to support its employees to boost their morale and improve their skills which is critical to building a generation of leaders in airport management.

For his part, Hamood bin Salim al Hajri, Senior Manager Learning and Development at Oman

Airports, said: "We are proud of the six of our company's employees passing the global training programme, the world's leading provider of airport management and operations education for those willing to keep current on policies, standards and processes

in airport managements while meeting the growing challenges in the aviation sector and learning about the experiences of global leaders through lectures, courses and workshops provided by the training programme."

Al Hajri further noted that the programme introduces trainees to six-month courses and workshops and comprises a set of programmes in executive management and airport management and operation.

Trainees must pass a series of training stages in the programme, which introduces them to leadership, management and financial skills, thus qualifying them to become competent in the field of airport management.

HIRE DOMESTIC HELP THROUGH PROPER CHANNEL

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

In families where both the spouses are working, an additional person to do the household jobs becomes a necessity. Taking care of the children at home, attending to the elderly who might not be able to move or do their chores alone, are some of the worries of modern-day couples, as they have deadlines to meet at work and match with the responsibilities at home. In such a scenario, a domestic help, a driver, or a caretaker becomes an absolute necessity, and the head of the family faces the herculean task of getting a good person as domestic help. More often than not, he ends up taking the shortcut, which is not without risk. Unscrupulous agents are on the prowl of offering domestic help with lesser

documentation at a lower salary. To avoid any problem after employing domestic help, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has urged all citizens and residents to hire domestic help only from authorised agents operating in the country. “This instruction is for the smooth recruitment process and to safeguard the interests of both the employer and the employee,” a statement from the ROP has said. This comes in the wake of a recent incident in which a woman was arrested on charges of fraud and manipulation as she swindled money by offering the services of domestic help. “We would like to advise all citizens and residents not to be carried away by such online promises until their claims are verified as to its authenticity, and not to transfer any money until after guarantees are obtained.”

Different countries have different sets of formalities to hire domestic help from their country. Most of them have detailed the steps to be followed on their websites. “One needs to obtain a permit to recruit foreign workers to work in private houses and this applies to the positions of drivers, cooks, nannies and other similar professions. An accredited typing office, Sanad office, would complete the documentation for a fee and this is the safest mode of bringing in domestic help,” Bakhit bin Humaid al Balushi, who runs a recruitment office, said. Oman, on January 27, revised the fees to recruit domestic help with a provision of RO 141 for permits to bring a domestic worker and this fee applies to one to three workers. The employer in this case has to pay RO 241 for any domestic worker from four and above.

One needs to obtain a permit to recruit foreign workers to work in private houses and this applies to the positions of drivers, cooks, nannies and other similar professions. An accredited typing office, Sanad office, would complete the documentation for a fee and this is the safest mode of bringing in domestic help

BAKHIT HUMAID
AL BALUSHI
Recruitment office





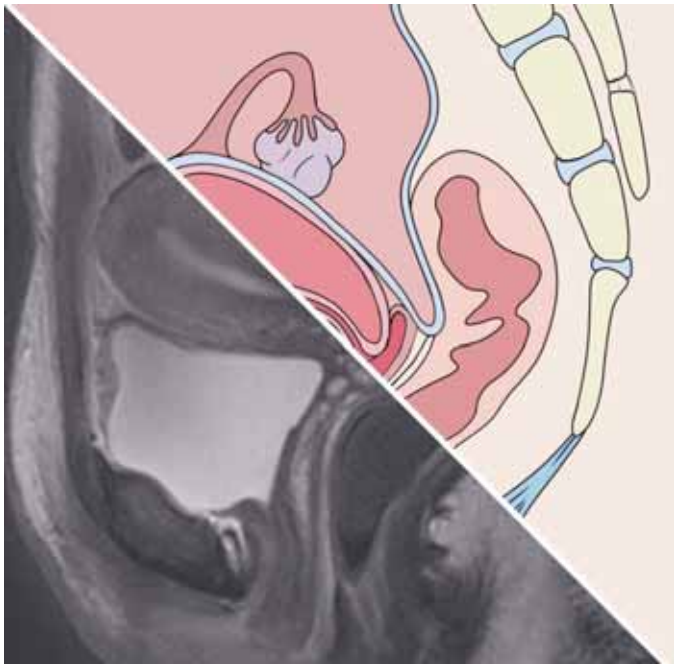
No Covid death as 161 new cases reported

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday reported 161 new cases of Covid-19, bringing the total number of cases registered in the Sultanate to 134,685.

The ministry reported zero Covid-19-related death, keeping the total death toll at 1,532.

The total cases of recovery reached 127,054, or 94.3 per cent of the total cases reported. Sixteen patients were hospitalised during the past 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients in hospitals to 90, including 29 in Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

— ONA



App to help ease radiology tests

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 2

Health specialists have come out with a mobile application 'Radiology simple guide' to upgrade the level of professionalism among the health workers.

The application has been developed and designed by a group of experts including Dr Ishaq bin Sulaiman al Salmi, Radiology Specialist in the Royal Hospital, Dr Iman bin Mohammed al Hadidi, Radiology Specialist in the Directorate-General of

Health Services in Muscat Governorate, and Abdulaziz bin Bader al Salmi, Programming Technician.

The application is for those who are interested in MRI on reading and analysing various types of MRI. The application targets all the trainees and specialists of the discipline along with oncologists, gynaecologists and obstetricians. To begin with, the app focuses on training the users on reading and analysing radiation in the pelvis area. Producing similar programmes for the

chest X-ray is in progress in cooperation with Dr Rashid al Amiri, consultant at the Royal Hospital, as well as for the prostate IMR. The future plan is to produce at least 10 various programmes including the most frequent radiology tests used. Many components have been added to the app such as an introduction in IMR, reading pelvis IMR, introduction to the most common diseases in the pelvis area with images, and factual reports to assist the beginners. The information of the app is being displayed in an in-

novative feature that simulates the realistic work environment adopted in reading the radiation. Also, the app improves the professional performance of the users and reduces making mistakes in reading the radiation. The application can be downloaded in both the androids and iPhones via the following links: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.radiologysimpleguide.app> <https://apps.apple.com/om/app/radiology-simple-guide/id1537300225?l=ar>

Awareness week highlights risk factors leading to breast cancer

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 2

The Sultanate is taking part in the Gulf Breast Cancer Awareness Week along with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries which started on Monday. The awareness week (February 1-7) is dedicated to promoting health awareness

about risk factors leading to breast cancer.

The Oman Breast Cancer Society (OBCS), in line with the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control in Kuwait and the Gulf Centre for Cancer Control and Prevention in Riyadh, is celebrating the event under the theme '40 per cent Protection and 40 per cent healing'

Dr Adil al Ajmi, Head of

Oncologic Surgery Unit in Sultan Qaboos University and President of OBCS, said the awareness week aims at integrating media messages within the systems of the GCC countries as well combining efforts and taking appropriate decisions to combat the disease, which requires intense scientific awareness based on scientific

facts, updates and scientific research outcomes in cancer medicine.

The slogan of the week '40/40' indicates that 40 per cent of cancer diseases can be prevented by following a healthy lifestyle, adopting correct dietary habits, practicing regular physical activity and maintaining ideal body weight, while the other 40

per cent represents the increased recovery percentage from the disease if detected early.

Activities of the week will include health awareness lectures and walkathons along with a breast cancer awareness day.

Dr Al Ajmi made emphasis on the significance of such campaigns due to increasing rates of breast cancer cases

locally and globally. Awareness highlights the disease's nature, health services available in Oman, in addition to the importance of prevention and early detection.

"Given the disease statistics in many countries, Oman is the least affected. However, most of the cases in the Sultanate are in advanced stages," he said.



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tenders.

Tender No	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
20/2020	Operation and Maintenance work- Muscat	Excellent - minimum of ten (10) years experience in Operation and Maintenance Services of the Facilities and Equipments*	11 th February 2021	30 th March 2021	1,500/-
24/2020	Electrical Works	Excellent	11 th February 2021	23 rd March 2021	350/-

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 - 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer.
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as soft copy (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (bill 1&2 separated from bill3)
 - Technical files.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

CBSE board examinations from May 4

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 2

The CBSE board exams for Grade 10 and 12 will begin on May 4, India's Ministry of Education said on Tuesday.

Grade 10 exams will finish on June 7, while Grade 12 exams will conclude on June 11. Practical exams will begin on March 1.

On four days, the Grade 10 exams will be held in two shifts — the first will be from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm, and the second will be from 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm.

All Grade 10 exams will be held from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm.

All exams will be held in the offline-written mode, and with Covid-19 safety protocols in place. These include wearing face masks at all times, the use of hand sanitisers and maintaining social distance.

Recently, principals of Indian schools had virtually joined the 33rd Gulf Sahodaya Conference in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh to discuss upcoming board exams and the New Education Policy (NEP) that was announced in 2020.

Gulf Sahodaya is a body of CBSE school principals from six GCC countries of UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

The CBSE has also said that on the four days Class XII exams will be held over two shifts, staff working in the morning will not be given afternoon duty.

Results will be announced by July 15.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Holding invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below;

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS	TIME & LAST DATE FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSION	TENDER FEE (OMR)
EHC/2021/5	ACCOUNTING SERVICES FOR NSS (NAMA SHARED SERVICES COMPANY) AND NICD (NUMO INSTITUTE FOR COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT)	10-FEB-2021	17-FEB-2021	25/-

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee" and must write on the envelope the tender name & number.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tenderer name & tender no. as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception before 12.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on 17-FEB-2021
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of Nama Holding ". Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Interested party to deposit Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on: Account Name: Electricity Holding Company, Bank Muscat: 0423-010776440-018 Corporate Branch (Bidder name and Tender Number to be clearly mentioned). Tender Documents will be received by email.
- Bidders to send the deposit slip to: Yasmeen.allawati@holding.nama.om
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559287 / 277
E-Mail: Yasmeen.allawati@Holding.nama.om

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the *Observer* classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.

Iran enriching uranium with advanced centrifuges: IAEA

VIENNA: Iran has begun enriching uranium with a second cascade of advanced IR-2m centrifuges in its underground plant at Natanz in breach of its deal with major powers, a UN nuclear watchdog report to member states showed.

Iran was already enriching with one cascade, or cluster, of 174 IR-2m machines underground at Natanz. It informed the International Atomic Energy Agency in December that it planned to install three more IR-2m cascades there, one of which is now online, the IAEA report dated on Monday said.

“The Agency also verified that installation of the second of the aforementioned three (extra) cascades of IR-2m centrifuges was nearing completion and installation of the third of these cascades had started”, said the confidential report.

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif suggested a way to overcome the US-Iranian impasse over who goes first in returning to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, saying a top EU official could “synchronize” or “choreograph” the moves.

Zarif’s stance was a shift from his position, expressed in a January 22 article in which he said the United States should remove US sanctions before Iran returned to the deal.

“There can be a mechanism to basically either synchronize it



Top EU official could ‘synchronize’ or ‘choreograph’ moves to overcome US-Iranian impasse over who goes first in returning to 2015 Iran nuclear deal

MOHAMMAD ZARIF
Iranian Foreign Minister

or coordinate what can be done”, Zarif told CNN when asked how to bridge the gap. Each government wants the other to resume compliance first with the agreement.

BREAKOUT TIME
Meanwhile, Israel’s energy minister on Tuesday said it would take Iran around six months to produce enough fissile material for a single nuclear weapon, a timeline almost twice as long as that anticipated by a senior member of the Biden administration.

Israel is wary of the Biden

administration’s intent to re-enter the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal and has long opposed the agreement. Washington argues that the previous Trump administration’s withdrawal from the deal backfired by prompting Iran to abandon caps on nuclear activities.

Speaking last month a day before he took office as US secretary of state, Antony Blinken said that the so-called “breakout time” — in which Iran might ramp up enrichment of uranium to bomb-fuel purity — “has gone from beyond a year (under the deal) to about three or four months”. He said he based his comments on information in public reporting.

But Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, in a radio interview, said the Trump administration “seriously damaged Iran’s nuclear project and entire force build-up”.

“In terms of enrichment, they (Iranians) are in a situation of breaking out in around half a year if they do everything required”, he told public broadcaster Kan. “As for nuclear weaponry, the range is around one or two years.”

Iran, which denies seeking nuclear weaponry, has recently accelerated its breaches of the deal, which it started violating in 2019 response to the US withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions against it. — **Reuters**

■ RAFAH CROSSING REOPENS



A Palestinian woman waits with her children at the Rafah border crossing departure area to travel from the Gaza Strip into Egypt after the announcement that Egypt would reopen it from February 1 to 4. — **AFP**

Palestinians and Tunisians to be among first COVAX recipients

CAIRO: The Palestinian territories and Tunisia will benefit from a first wave of coronavirus vaccines from the COVAX scheme, but poorer states in the Middle East face a big gap in early vaccine provision, a World Health Organization (WHO) official said.

The Palestinian territories are expected to receive 37,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech starting in mid-February through COVAX, while Tunisia is due to receive 93,600 doses, said Rick Brennan, Emergency Director for the WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean

region. Two doses of the vaccine are recommended per person.

The WHO set up COVAX along with the GAVI vaccine alliance to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccinations globally.

However, there was a “very significant gap” between the planned vaccine rollout in wealthy countries and those that are lower-income or affected by conflict, Brennan said in an interview. The WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean region includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Djibouti, as well as Middle Eastern states.

“Until the pharmaceutical companies and the wealthier countries fully resource COVAX, which is the mechanism that we have set up to distribute the vaccines to the poorer countries, those countries are going to be left behind”, he said in an interview.

“The availability and the finances aren’t at the level yet that they need to be. We’re well short”, he added.

Lags in vaccine provision for poorer countries increased the risk of the spread of coronavirus variants that could be more easily transmissible and harder to treat, said Brennan. — **Reuters**

Rights group urges fair coronavirus vaccine rollout in Syria

DAMASCUS: Human Rights Watch on Tuesday urged support for aid groups to ensure “equitable” distribution of coronavirus vaccines across all of war-torn Syria, warning against any discriminatory approach by Damascus.

“Those supplying vaccines for Syria should do everything in their power to ensure that... (they) reach those most vulnerable no matter where they are in the country”, HRW researcher Sara Kayyali said.

“The Syrian government has never been shy about withholding healthcare as a weapon of war, but playing this game with the

vaccine undermines the global effort to control the pandemic.”

“International aid groups should have support to secure the widest and most equitable distribution... including (in) all areas controlled by different groups”, the rights organisation said.

The New York-based group made the call following restrictions to aid deliveries to the country’s rebel-held northwest and Kurdish-held northeast Syria in recent years, under pressure from Damascus’ ally Moscow at the UN Security Council.

Aid can only enter northwest Syria from a single border crossing



Children play as US soldier patrol in Syria’s northeastern Hasakah province. — **AFP**

from Turkey, which backs rebels in that area, while aid to northeast Syria now needs to transit through Damascus, where HRW says authorities often withhold or delay permission.

Since the start of the coronavirus outbreak last year, Syria’s government has recorded 14,096 cases of Covid-19 in areas it controls, including 926 deaths.

In rebel-held northwest Syria, opposition officials have said 21,006 people caught the virus, of whom 400 died. In the Kurdish-held northeast, the Kurdish administration has said 8,490 people fell ill with coronavirus, including 296 who died. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

ANKARA

Erdogan ally backs call to rewrite constitution

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s ruling coalition partner on Tuesday backed the Turkish leader’s surprise call to draft a new constitution, which some see as a bid to extend his rule.

Erdogan caught many off guard on Monday by suggesting that the “clear source of Turkey’s problems” was its constitution being “written by putchists” following a 1980 military coup.

He said he would push for a constitutional assembly if his junior partners in the ultrana-



tionalist MHP party support re-writing Turkey’s basic law.

MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli told reporters on Tuesday that it was “evident that Turkey needs a new constitution”. — **AFP**

DUBAI

Made in India vaccines reach Emirates

Dubai will start vaccinating people with the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 shot, the state media office said on Tuesday as the United Arab Emirates battles its biggest outbreak since the pandemic began.

The first shipment has arrived from India, the media office said in a tweet.

A source aware of the vaccine shipments said 200,000 doses had been shipped under a the agreement between Dubai authorities and the Serum



Institute of India (SII).

India’s Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar tweeted: “Made in India vaccines reach Dubai. A special friend, a special relationship.” — **Reuters**

BERLIN

Refugee launches bid for political office

A man who arrived in Germany five years ago as an asylum seeker launched his bid on Tuesday to become the first Syrian refugee elected to the German parliament.

“As the first Syrian refugee in the Bundestag, I want to give a political voice to the hundreds of thousands of people who have been forced to flee and who live with us”, Tareq Alaows, a candidate for the Greens in North Rhine Westphalia, said in his campaign video. “In conflict



and while fleeing, I had to see for myself what it means to be disenfranchised”, Alaows added in accented but fluent German, while vowing to defend human rights if elected. — **dpa**

In brief

■ MANILA



EU ACCUSED OF HOLDING VACCINES HOSTAGE

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has accused the European Union of holding up supplies of Covid-19 vaccines to other countries and complained that less wealthy countries lacked the power to secure all they sought.

“This is a fight among the highest bidders, who can pay first”, Duterte said in a televised address.

“We are not rich”, he said, although he assured the public his government has the funds to procure vaccines.

The Philippines has more than 527,000 confirmed coronavirus cases — among the highest in Asia — and 10,807 deaths. — **Reuters**

■ KUALA LUMPUR



SECOND LOCKDOWN EXTENDED TO MID-FEBRUARY

Malaysia’s government on Tuesday extended a lockdown and broad movement restrictions by two weeks, as the Southeast Asian nation grapples with a surge in coronavirus infections that has pushed the cumulative total past 200,000 cases. The lockdown, which covered all but one state and was to end on February 4, will now continue until February 18, Defence Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said. The restrictions are the second time Malaysia’s government has imposed a lockdown.

“The health ministry has confirmed that daily cases in all states are still showing a rising trend.” — **Reuters**

■ JAKARTA



BRITISH WOMAN ON TERROR SUSPECT LIST DETAINED

Indonesia has detained a British woman named on a list of global terror suspects and plans to deport her for visa violations, authorities said on Tuesday.

Tazneen Miriam Sailer — a Manchester-born married to an Indonesian who was killed in Syria — is not charged with terror offences. But she and her late husband are on an Indonesian police list of suspected extremists that includes several foreigners notorious in the West.

Sailer, 47, and her 10-year-old Indonesia-born son, were being held in Jakarta after being picked up last year without documents allowing her to remain in the Southeast Asian nation, her lawyer Farid Ghazali said. — **AFP**

Myanmar junta replaces ministers, Suu Kyi’s whereabouts unknown

NAYPYIDAW: The party of Myanmar’s detained elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi called on Tuesday for her immediate release and for the junta to recognise her victory in November elections, a day after a military coup sparked global outrage.

The United States threatened to reimpose sanctions on Myanmar’s generals after they seized power and arrested Suu Kyi and dozens of her allies in dawn raids on Monday.

The Nobel Peace laureate’s whereabouts remained unknown more than 24 hours after her arrest and her only communication has come in the form of a statement written in anticipation of the coup calling for protests against military dictatorship. Consolidating its position, the new junta removed 24 ministers and named 11 replacements for various portfolios including finance, defence, foreign affairs and interior.

Military chief Min Aung Hlaing has promised a free and fair election and a handover of power to the winner but without giving a timeframe.

The coup followed a landslide win for Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD)



A military armoured vehicle is seen along a street in Myitkyina, Kachin State, on Tuesday as Myanmar’s generals appeared in firm control of the country. — **AFP**

in November 8 elections, a result the military has refused to accept citing unsubstantiated allegations of fraud. The army handed power to its commander, General Min Aung Hlaing, and imposed a state of emergency for a year, crushing hopes the poverty-stricken country also known as Burma was on the path to stable democracy.

The NLD’s executive committee demanded the release of all detainees “as soon as possible”.

In a post on the Facebook page of senior party official May Win Myint, the committee also called for the military to acknowledge the election results and for the new parliament to be allowed to sit. It has been due to meet on Monday

for the first time since the election.

US President Joe Biden called the crisis a direct assault on Myanmar’s transition to democracy and the rule of law, and said his administration would watch how other countries responded.

“We will work with our partners throughout the region and the

world to support the restoration of democracy and the rule of law, as well as to hold accountable those responsible for overturning Burma’s democratic transition”, Biden said in a statement.

The crisis is one of the first major tests of Biden’s pledge to collaborate more with allies on international challenges, especially on China’s growing influence.

The United Nations led condemnation of the coup and calls for the release of detainees, in comments largely echoed by Australia, the European Union, India and Japan.

‘WORRY FOR THE FUTURE’

China did not join the condemnation, saying only that it noted the events and called on all sides to respect the constitution. Other countries in the region including neighbouring Thailand declined to comment on Myanmar’s “internal affairs”.

The streets of Myanmar were quiet overnight during a curfew already in place to stop the coronavirus. Troops and riot police took up positions in the capital, Naypyitaw, and the main commercial centre, Yangon.

— **Reuters**

■ BUILD BRIDGES, NOT WALLS



A barricade is seen along a blocked highway as Indian farmers continue their protest against the central government’s recent agricultural reforms at Delhi-Uttar Pradesh state border in Ghaziabad. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday shared pictures of barricades and concertina wires with a four-word message to the government — ‘build bridges, not walls’. — **AFP**

3 killed in wave of bomb attacks in Afghanistan

KABUL: At least three people were killed and seven wounded in a series of explosions in Afghanistan on Tuesday, after Western countries called on the Taliban to end a wave of violence that the group denies responsibility for.

With Washington and Nato reviewing plans to withdraw their forces from the country by May, one blast in Kabul hit an SUV and killed two people, including Mohammad Atif, the head of non-governmental charity Jamiat-i-Islah, police in the capital said.

Two other explosions in the city, which caused injuries, targeted, respectively, a jeep of the counter-narcotics force and a civilian vehicle.

All three blasts were caused by small magnetic devices known as sticky bombs, police said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told the media that the Kabul explosions “had nothing to do with us.”



Afghan security forces escort suspected Taliban fighters as they are being presented in front of the media after an operation at the National Directorate of Security headquarters in Herat on Tuesday. — **AFP**

In the eastern city of Jalalabad, one soldier was killed and two injured in an explosion targeting their vehicle, Attaullah Khogyani, Nangarhar provincial governor spokesman, said. Another explosion in central Parwan province targeted a senior security official.

The European Union, Nato, and a number of Western

embassies said on Sunday that the Taliban bore responsibility for “the majority of this targeted violence.”

The group’s attacks “undermine state institutions and contribute to an insecure environment in which terrorist and criminal groups are able to freely operate”, they added in a statement. — **Reuters**

Japan-India port deal scrapped by Lanka

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka said on Tuesday it had pulled out of an agreement with Japan and India to develop a deep-sea container terminal. The East Container Terminal in Colombo port is being built next to \$500 million Chinese-run container jetty, and was to be developed as a joint venture — with India and Japan owning 49 per cent.

But the government in recent weeks has faced opposition from nationalists within its coalition who are against the sale of national assets to foreigners.

The deep-sea jetty deal was signed in May 2019, a few months before President Gotabaya Rajapaksa came to power. The government said in a statement that it would instead develop the site “as a wholly-owned container terminal of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority” for \$800 million.

The decision marks a u-turn from the statement made by Rajapaksa over two weeks ago, when he said

the project would go ahead, citing “regional geo-political concerns”.

It also comes the day after the Indian High Commission in Colombo called on the government to honour its obligations on the deal.

When Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s brother Mahinda — who is now the prime minister — was president between 2005 and 2015, Colombo borrowed billions from China, accumulating a mountain of debt for a string of infrastructure projects.

With credit agencies cutting Sri Lanka’s debt ratings as the island nation reels from the economic impact of its pandemic lockdowns and the 2019 deadly Easter bombings, the government is expecting more Chinese loans this year.

In December 2017, unable to repay a huge Chinese loan, Sri Lanka allowed China Merchants Port Holdings to takeover deep-sea port in Hambantota, which straddles the world’s busiest east-west shipping route. — **AFP**



A general view of the Chinese-managed terminal of the Colombo port is seen from the Galle Face promenade in Colombo. — **AFP**

UK sees problems with N Ireland trade, trust with EU damaged

LONDON: British minister Michael Gove said there were serious problems with the post-Brexit arrangements for trade with Northern Ireland and called for more time to work out how to better implement the new rules.

Gove also criticised the European Union for damaging trust by trying last week to impose controls on the export of vaccines to the British province, saying the bloc had acted unilaterally and without following the proper procedures.

Northern Ireland shares Britain's only land border in the EU and has become a focal point for the difficulties of post-Brexit trade, with goods flowing into the province from Britain subject to expensive and time-consuming extra checks. Gove's comments showed ministers are now taking delays getting goods from Britain to Northern Ireland more seriously, after the government initially said they were teething problems.

"In the short term, there are a number of issues which I would not describe as teething problems — they are significant issues which bear on the lives of people in Northern Ireland, which do need to be resolved," Gove told parliament. He called for the extension of grace periods which temporarily waive some of the border rules and said



A P&O ferry arrives at the Port of Larne in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, on Tuesday. The British government condemned threats to port workers implementing post-Brexit trade checks in Northern Ireland and called for clear heads to ease tensions. — AFP

the EU needed to work with Britain "at speed and with determination" to resolve outstanding issue in the so-called Northern Ireland Protocol.

"We do need to make sure that grace periods are extended, we do need to make sure that supermarkets and other traders can continue, as they are at the moment, to be able to supply consumers with the goods that they need," Gove said.

On the vaccine row, he said the EU had acted outside the rules set out in the protocol, part of the treaty governing Britain's exit from the bloc.

The EU dramatically escalated its fight to secure vaccine supplies on Friday by saying it would trigger clauses in the protocol to prevent vaccines from moving across the open Irish border.

The European Commission swiftly reversed its position after

an outcry in London, Dublin and Belfast, but Gove said trust had been damaged by the episode.

"Trust has been eroded, damage has been done and urgent action is therefore needed," Gove said, stressing that he was not trying to whip up anti-EU feeling.

"This isn't some sort of gaggle of eurosceptics, you know, rehearsing traditional lines, it's just recognition that the Commission mucked up." — Reuters

Court rejects complaint over male-dominated parliament



KARLSRUHE: A group of women angered by the lack of female representation in the German parliament complained to the country's top court for constitutional matters — but failed to convince the judges.

The complaint, referring to the 2017 Bundestag elections, was "inadmissible," according to a statement released by the Constitutional Court on Tuesday.

Germany's last election saw the proportion of women in the national legislature decrease to less than a third.

Women made up just over half of voters that year but only a quarter of constituency candidates were female, while 34.7 per cent of

electoral lists were made up of women.

The complainants challenged a lack of statutory provisions requiring gender balance in both constituency races and the party lists, which exist in tandem under the country's two-vote electoral system.

However, the top court said that they failed to show any legal requirement on the part of the federal legislator to ensure such fair representation.

The statement noted that the judges did not pass judgement on whether enshrining such gender parity in law would be compatible with the country's constitution. — dpa

Russian Sputnik V vaccine 92% effective in fighting Covid-19

MOSCOW: Scientists gave Russia's Sputnik V vaccine the green light on Tuesday saying it was almost 92 per cent effective in fighting Covid-19 based on peer-reviewed late-stage trial results published in *The Lancet* international medical journal. Experts said the Phase III trial results meant the world had another effective weapon to fight the deadly pandemic and justified to some extent Moscow's decision to roll out the vaccine before final data had been released.

The results, collated by the Gamaleya Institute in Moscow that developed and tested the vaccine, were in line with efficacy data reported at earlier stages of the trial, which has been running in Moscow since September.

"The development of the Sputnik V vaccine has been criticised for unseemly haste, corner cutting, and an absence



of transparency," said Ian Jones, professor at the University of Reading, and Polly Roy, professor at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

"But the outcome reported here is clear and the scientific principle of vaccination is demonstrated," the scientists, who were not involved in the study, said in a comment shared by *The Lancet*. "Another vaccine can now join the fight to reduce the incidence of Covid-19." The results were based

on data from 19,866 volunteers, of whom a quarter received a placebo, the researchers, led by the Gamaleya Institute's Denis Logunov, said in *The Lancet*.

Since the trial began in Moscow, there were 16 recorded cases of symptomatic Covid-19 among people who received the vaccine, and 62 among the placebo group, the scientists said.

This showed that a two-dose regimen of the vaccine — two shots based on two different viral vectors, administered 21 days apart — was 91.6 per cent effective against symptomatic Covid-19.

'RUSSIA WAS RIGHT'

The Sputnik V vaccine is the fourth worldwide to have Phase III results published in leading peer-reviewed medical journals following the shots developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca. — Reuters

Heavy snowfall in US disrupts travel

NEW YORK: A major winter storm that has already dropped more than a foot of snow across the Northeastern United States and killed an elderly Pennsylvania woman was expected to pound inland areas with potential blizzard conditions on Tuesday.

The storm cancelled flights across the region and halted some subway service in New York City on Monday, dumping 27 inches (68 cm) of snow in areas of New Jersey and Pennsylvania and 17 inches (43 cm) in New York City.

Police in Allentown, Pennsylvania, said that a 67-year-old woman suffering from Alzheimer's disease was found lying dead in the snow on Monday after wandering away from her home.

"The increasing winds could result in near blizzard conditions due to blowing and drifting of the snow," the National Weather Service (NWS) said in its forecast for Tuesday.

"This storm will be slow to



The frozen Josephine Shaw Lowell Memorial Fountain in Bryant Park is pictured during a winter storm in New York City. — AFP

depart as the main storm centre becomes nearly stationary off the southern New England coast (and) expands its influence across the Northeast," the weather service said.

Some areas of the New England coast, which saw a mix of snow and rain on Monday, were forecast by the NWS to see

up to 15 inches (38 cm) of snow on Tuesday as the storm moved north.

Early predictions had called for the storm to bring up to two feet of snow to New York City in recent years, the most since a record-breaking blizzard dumped 27.5 inches (70 cm) on the city in 2016. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

PALO ALTO

Trump supporter groups grow rapidly on FB

Far-right backers of Donald Trump are drumming up support on social media for the idea of a "Patriot Party," using references to militia groups and promoting a mix of conspiracy theories, according to a study published on Tuesday.

The online campaign for a proposed alternative to the Republican Party has heavily promoted "Stop the Steal" events throughout the country, including the violent siege of Capitol Hill on January 6, pushing the false claim that the former US president lost Novem-



ber's election due to widespread fraud. Amid a rift with several Republican leaders over the Capitol riot, Trump has talked about forming a new political party, his advisers say. — Reuters

LONDON

Lockdown hero 'Captain Tom' dies at 100

Captain Tom Moore, who won British hearts with a Covid-19 fundraising drive last year, on Tuesday died aged 100 after catching the virus, his family said.

They posted a picture of the charity hero with the words "Captain Sir Tom Moore 1920-2021" on his official Twitter page.

His daughters Hannah Ingram-Moore and Lucy Teixeira said in a statement that they were "so grateful that we were with him during the last hours of his



life". "We spent hours chatting to him, reminiscing about our childhood and our wonderful mother. We shared laughter and tears together. — AFP

BERLIN

Police break up wedding party, pepper-spray guests

A wedding party held in a Berlin flat was broken up by police for violating anti-coronavirus rules, authorities said on Tuesday, adding that officers had to use pepper spray in the fray.

Ten people aged between 15 and 53 were caught celebrating in an apartment in the district of Schoeneberg on Monday evening, police said in a statement.

The revellers allegedly resisted police orders and were pepper-sprayed. Six guests



sustained minor injuries and received medical treatment at the scene.

One woman who refused help from paramedics was taken to hospital. — dpa

Biden to turn a new page on immigration...

CHARLOTTE PLANTIVE

US President Joe Biden will call for his administration to streamline the naturalisation of nine million migrants, senior officials said, as part of a raft of steps aimed at rolling back the “failed” policies of his hardline Republican predecessor.

The Democratic president will sign a series of executive orders overhauling the US immigration process on Tuesday, officials said, signalling a return to a more inclusive policy. Biden is also set to order a review of all legal obstacles to immigration and integration that were put in place under Donald Trump.

“The review will likely lead to dramatic changes in policies,” according to a senior government official, saying the goal is “to restore faith in our legal immigration system, and promote integration of Americans.”

“President Trump was so focused on the wall that he did nothing to address the root cause of why people are coming to our southern border,” the official said. “It was a limited, wasteful

THE PRESIDENT
WILL SIGN
A SERIES OF
EXECUTIVE
ORDERS
OVERHAULING
THE US
IMMIGRATION

and naive strategy, and it failed.”

In line with campaign promises, one of the orders will put in place a working group tasked with reuniting migrant families separated by Trump’s “zero tolerance” policy put in place in 2018.

That policy allowed officials to prosecute and deport adults who had entered the US illegally. Their children were then placed into federal custody.

Faced with international outcry, and even criticism from within his own party, the Trump administration was forced to scale down the policy, but hundreds of migrant children have still not been returned to their parents.

The working group will examine ways to reunite the families, officials said, without specifying whether that could allow parents or children who had been deported to return to US soil.

A second executive order echoes a similar policy under the Barack Obama administration, putting in place legal mechanisms for prospective immigrants in their home countries to apply for residency, allowing them to avoid dangerous smuggling routes.

The third decree will promote

the integration of migrants legally settled in the United States and make naturalisation “more accessible to the more than nine million immigrants who are currently eligible to apply” for citizenship. There will be a review of the so-called “public charge rule” introduced in August 2019 that allowed officials to refuse citizenship or green card applications to migrants receiving social assistance, such as subsidised care or housing allowances.

The public charge rule “basically created or established a wealth test for immigrants,” one senior Biden official said. Most of the reforms will be led by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Biden has nominated Alejandro Mayorkas to the position, and the Senate will vote on his appointment midday on Tuesday.

If confirmed, Mayorkas — who arrived in the United States as an infant as the son of Cuban refugees — will be the first Hispanic person to lead the Department of Homeland Security, a sprawling agency that oversees immigration issues, border police and emergency responses. — AFP

LIFE IN FEAR

Eritrean refugees caught in crossfire of war

ROBBIE COREY-BOULET

They have survived gun battles, attempted abductions, attacks by angry militiamen and days-long treks to safety with nothing to eat but moringa leaves.

Yet Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia fear their suffering may not be over, as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed strains to end a brutal conflict in the northern region of Tigray that has rendered them uniquely vulnerable.

Nearly 100,000 refugees from Eritrea, an oppressive, authoritarian nation bordering Ethiopia to the north, were registered in four camps in Tigray when fighting erupted in November between Abiy’s government and the regional ruling party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF).

Two of those camps, Hitsats and Shimelba, were caught up in hostilities and remain inaccessible to the United Nations refugee agency and its Ethiopian counterpart, the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA).

The information vacuum has spurred dire speculation over the refugees’ fate.

The UN has sounded the alarm over reported targeted killings and abductions by Eritrean soldiers, whose role in the conflict is widely documented but officially denied by Addis Ababa and Asmara.

The US State Department last week cited “credible reports” of looting and violence in the camps.

“Most of the people, if you search this camp, they’ll start crying when they talk about what happened

GIRMAY
A refugee

On his first trip to Ethiopia since the conflict began, UN refugees chief Filippo Grandi over the weekend visited Mai Aini, one of two camps in southern Tigray where the UN has regained access. The camp is now home to hundreds of refugees from Hitsats, some of whom said of the horrors they left behind.

“Most of the people, if you search this camp, they’ll start crying when they talk about what happened,” said Girmay, who like other refugees insisted on using only one name, fearing reprisals.

“Our friends could be alive or dead. We don’t know.”

The TPLF dominated Ethiopian politics for almost three decades — it was in power when Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a border war that killed tens of thousands between 1998 and 2000 and led to a two-decade stalemate.

After taking office in 2018, Abiy initiated a surprise rapprochement with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, a move that won him the Nobel Peace Prize the following year.

Yet Isaias and the TPLF — whose region borders Eritrea — remain bitter enemies, heightening the risks for Eritrean refugees caught up in the conflict. Once fighting reached Hitsats in late November, pro-TPLF militiamen targeted refugees in reprisal killings after suffering battlefield setbacks against Eritrean troops, several refugees said.

On one morning the militiamen shot dead nine young Eritrean men outside a church, they said.

Pro-TPLF forces based themselves out of Hitsats for weeks, forbidding hungry residents from going out in search of food and shooting dead several who tried anyway. — AFP

BREAKING THE MOULD

Want a stronger world after Covid-19? Choose more women leaders

EMMA BATHA

Countries must put more women into leadership roles to build a stronger post-pandemic world, a top UN official said on Monday as data showed women could be waiting more than a century to see equality at the highest political echelons.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who made history as South Africa’s first female deputy president in 2005, said gender-balanced cabinets made better decisions not just for women, but for society as a whole.

Global progress on getting more women into top roles is frustratingly slow, she said.

But she believes Kamala Harris’s appointment as the first female US vice-president will make other countries take note and spur more women to consider running for office.

“It does help if a big country breaks the mould. It pushes other countries forward,” she said.

Mlambo-Ngcuka said Harris, who is of Indian and Jamaican heritage, was a particularly important role model for young women of colour.

“They now have someone who looks like them, who they can identify with,” she said, adding that she had witnessed how her own appointment in 2005 had encouraged the ambitions of a younger generation.

“It was such a fulfilling feeling to hear young women (saying) ‘Wow, this is on the table. I can also go for this,’” Mlambo-Ngcuka said.

Only 22 countries have an elected woman head of state or government,



US Vice-President Kamala Harris receives her second dose of the Moderna vaccine at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. — Reuters

ONLY 22 COUNTRIES
HAVE AN ELECTED
WOMAN HEAD
OF STATE OR
GOVERNMENT,
WHILE 119 NATIONS
HAVE NEVER HAD A
WOMAN LEADER

while 119 nations have never had a woman leader, according to UN Women, which said gender parity would not be achieved for another 130 years at the current rate of progress.

The analysis also showed parity would not be reached in national parliaments before 2063, and in ministerial positions before 2077.

In early 2020, only 14 countries had cabinets where women held at least half of posts. They included Rwanda, Finland, Canada, Colombia and Peru.

The United States is set to join the club after President Joe Biden pledged to

pick a cabinet that “looks like America”.

Mlambo-Ngcuka said women seeking office faced multiple hurdles, including a lack of support from political parties, which made it very important that countries introduce quotas for female representation.

She also urged governments to criminalise violence against women in politics and called on social media platforms to tackle rising cyber-abuse, much of it involving sexual innuendo and body-shaming, which deterred women from taking public roles.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

sport



RESILIENT HAMED TOUCHES KILIMANJARO SUMMIT



“The biggest challenge was getting altitude sickness and I had to throw up a couple of times and face harsh cold

**HAMED
AL HARTHI**

Omani trail runner



HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, FEB 2

After setting himself up for a challenge of a lifetime at Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Hamed al Harthi has successfully completed the mission despite the hurdles.

Although the 62-year-old professional trail and long distance runner could not complete the initial target of finishing the run in under 12 hours, the Omani veteran wrapped up the entire run of 43.53 km in 15 hours, 23 minutes and nine seconds.

It was a monumental effort from the man considering the enormity of the challenge and the hiccups that he faced along the way to complete the run.

Hamed stated that the biggest challenge that he had to encounter during the course of the run was the altitude sickness that was affecting him.

“The biggest challenge was getting altitude sickness and I had to throw up a couple of times and face harsh cold”, Hamed added.

“Physically, I was at my best but altitude and lack of oxygen affected me so much”, he stated.

Hamed felt there was a tremendous sense of accomplishment after completing the run that had taken a lot of

HAMED'S JOURNEY

DISTANCE
COVERED
43.53 KM

TIME
15:23:49

preparation. “The feeling was of being thankful to beat that kind of challenge and to overcome the fear that this can't be done. And was happy to turn a dream into reality”, he added.

Hamed had also taken up the run to propagate the cause of autism awareness and was glad that he was able to put across his message for such a noble cause.

BIG CHANGE

“I was happy to create awareness of autism sufferers, especially in children in a little way. I request people to donate to Oman autism so that we can together make a big change through small changes”, he said.

Hamed was faced with a daunting challenge as he started the run.

“I started from Mweka gate at 5 am at 1,600 metres elevation. It was dark. After two hours I

reached Mweka camp at 3,100 metres elevation. Challenges were humid because of thick forest and going through mud”, he added.

“From Mweka camp I took an hour and five minutes to reach Millenium camp at 3,950 metres above sea level. Challenges were uneven trail. I had to negotiate through rocks, cold started increasing. I got a chance to eat a hot lunch”, Hamed explained.

The Omani veteran also described the stage during which he experienced altitude sickness and discomfort.

“From Millenium camp to Barafu camp at 4,673 metres elevation, I took one hour and 40 metres to get there. The altitude sickness struck me before reaching Barafu camp. I felt like vomiting for the fast time and to face strong winds. I had put light clothes so that I can move faster. From Barafu camp to the summit at 5,895 metres, I took five hours and 10 minutes. Challenges were vomiting, less oxygen, strong winds, close to the summit snow was flowing all the way to the summit. The last one kilometre I had to move through ice”, he added. It was a tremendous journey that Hamed managed to accomplish to lend his support to the cause of autism awareness and promote long distance running.



In brief

MELBOURNE



SA ANGRY AS AUSTRALIA PULL OUT OF TOUR AT SHORT NOTICE

Australia's decision to pull out of next month's three-test tour in South Africa due to the Covid-19 pandemic is "extremely disappointing" considering the hosts had put in place a number of safety measures, Cricket South Africa (CSA) said on Tuesday.

Cricket Australia's interim chief executive Nick Hockley had said in an earlier statement that travelling from Australia to South Africa posed an unacceptable level of health and safety risk to players, support staff and the community.

But CSA Director of Cricket Graeme Smith believes the Australian concerns are unfounded.

DUBAI



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFY FOR WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

The postponement of the Test series between South Africa and Australia means New Zealand have become the first team to qualify for the inaugural ICC World Test Championship final to be held in England from June 18 to 22, with June 23 as the reserve day.

New Zealand are currently ranked second on the ICC WTC table with a points percentage of 70 per cent, which has secured them a place in the final. They will be joined by either India, England, or Australia with the second spot being determined by the outcome of the India v England four-match Test series due to start on Friday.

Fired-up Djokovic makes perfect start



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates winning his group stage match against Canada's Denis Shapovalov at the ATP Cup in Melbourne. — Reuters

MELBOURNE: Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic got his season off to a perfect start with a battling win over Denis Shapovalov in the ATP Cup on Tuesday, but Rafael Nadal pulled out injured and world number three Dominic Thiem crashed to defeat.

The Serbian world number one, who will be chasing a ninth Australian Open crown when the year's first Grand Slam begins on Monday, was pushed hard before coming through 7-5, 7-5 against the hot shot Canadian on Rod Laver Arena.

Djokovic showed no signs of being hindered by a nasty blister on his racquet hand that troubled him at an Adelaide exhibition last week and returned 30 minutes later alongside Filip Frajinovic to play the decisive doubles rubber.

The pair beat Shapovalov and Milos Raonic 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) as defending champions Serbia took the Group A tie against Canada 2-1. "It was a great opening of the season. Playing Shapo is always a great challenge on hardcourts, he is such a dynamic, explosive player," said Djokovic, who was fired up by playing in front of a smattering of noisy Serbian fans.

"I thought we both played on a pretty high level, so I'm really pleased with the way I started the season.

"This is a great competition," added Djokovic, who won all eight matches he contested en route to the trophy last year. "We need more competitions where we represent a team, represent our country."

On a cool day, big-serving Raonic got Canada off to a blistering start, crushing Dusan Lajovic 6-3, 6-4 in 79 minutes to give his team a 1-0 lead, with the former world number three, now ranked 15, dropping just eight points on serve while sending

down 11 aces.

It was left to Djokovic to level the tie before clinching the doubles rubber.

Serbia beat Nadal's Spain in the final of the inaugural and hugely popular tournament last year in Sydney — launched as a rival to the Davis Cup.

It has been slimmed down from 24 teams to 12 this year

due to the coronavirus with all matches at Melbourne Park over five days with US\$7.5 million at stake, rather than the multi-city format employed in 2020.

Nadal was due to face Australia's Alex de Minaur in an evening Group B clash, but withdrew shortly beforehand with a back niggle.

"Hi all, we have decided with

Team Spain and my team, to not play today the first match of the ATP Cup here in Melbourne since I have a stiff low back," he tweeted.

Nadal, though, was in his team corner courtside, jumping up and down, and said he hoped to be fit by Thursday, when Spain meet Greece. In his absence, Spanish number two Roberto Bautista Agut stepped up to face de Minaur and rose to the challenge, bouncing back from losing the opening set to win 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Pablo Carreno Busta earlier beat John Millman 6-2, 6-4 to ensure his country claimed the tie.

THIEM TUMBLES

While Djokovic tasted victory, US Open champion Thiem, who lost to the Serb in a gripping Australian Open final last year, got his season off to a disappointing start. He slumped 6-2, 6-4 to Italian world number 10 Matteo Berrettini who never allowed the Austrian to get going with his big-swinging game.

"I'm very happy obviously for myself, but in this competition we're playing for a team, so it's really nice," Berrettini said. "I'm really happy with my performance.

"Playing for your country is something special."

Berrettini was under pressure after Austria took the lead in their Group C clash when 100th-ranked Dennis Novak earned one of the biggest wins of his career, upsetting world number 17 Fabio Fognini 6-3, 6-2.

It sent the tie to a deciding doubles with Thiem returning alongside Novak only to crash again, losing 6-1, 6-4 to Berrettini and Fognini.

Russia won the day's other tie against Argentina, with Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev both posting wins. — AFP

Impressive Osaka, Barty make winning start

MELBOURNE: Ashleigh Barty and Naomi Osaka made successful returns after long layoffs on Tuesday, fine-tuning their preparations ahead of the Australian Open.

In the night match, world number one Barty showed little rust to comfortably beat Ana Bogdan 6-3, 6-3 in the Yarra Valley Classic.

"I've missed coming out here competing but I felt great tonight," she said.

The Australian played her first tournament

in 11 months after opting to remain home in relatively Covid-19

free Queensland during the pandemic and even decided against defending her French Open crown.

Barty, hoping to break her country's 43-year singles title drought at the Australian Open, was made to work early before pouncing on Bogdan's tentative serve and she proved far too consistent for the Romanian. The 24-year-old plays world number 52 Marie Bouzkova next.

Osaka made similarly light work of France's Alize Cornet in the Japanese star's first competitive match since winning the US Open for a second time.

The three-time Grand Slam champion hit 22 winners to move into the third round of the Gippsland Trophy with a 6-2, 6-2 victory in Melbourne.

"I haven't played a match since the final in New York, I was definitely really nervous going into it," said Osaka, who won the Australian Open in 2019.

"But I'm really happy with how positive I was throughout the match." — AFP



Javed sisters bat PSM to victory in Women's T20 opener

MUSCAT: Pakistan Women rode on a solid match-winning show by Javed sisters to thrash Muscat Women by 9 wickets in the opening encounter of the much-awaited T-20 Women's League on OC turf 1 in Amerat on Monday.

Invited to bat first, Muscat Women posted 125 for 5 on the board with Amanda Dcosta (38 not out) and Kashish Deep (21) do the bulk of the scoring. Sameera Khan picked up 2 for 24.

PSM had little trouble chasing down the modest total, scoring 127 for 1 in just 12.3 overs thanks to Fiza Javed's superb unbeaten 50 off 42 and Hina Javed's 32 off 26.

DANMARK DOWN SKETCH

Earlier, in the men's league action, a match-winning 102-run opening wicket partnership between Lal Shankar (61) and Doresh Devender (50) powered Denmark CT to a comfortable 7-wicket victory against Sketch International in an E Division match at Muscat Municipality

ground 4 on Friday.

Yusuf Patanwala's superb 75 was the highlight of Sketch's 168 for 5 which Denmark chased down in the 18th over, scoring 171 for 3 thanks to brilliant batting by its openers. Mohammed Wasim scored a fluent 37 not out.

ARJUN HITS TON AS ROYAL POST 29-RUN WIN

In another E Division game, a magnificent 119 not out off 69 balls by Arjun Rajesh helped Sam Royal to an exciting 29-run win over Landmark Group at Muscat Municipality ground 3.

Arjun's ton was the main feature of Royals' 179 for 8. Ritesh lad and Krisgna Kydesi claimed three and two wickets respectively.

Landmark Group got off to a flying start, reaching 68 for 1 in 5.5 overs before seeing a dramatic collapse derail what looked like a promising chase, ending its 20 overs at 150 for 9.

Sheheel Abdu was the pick of Royals' bowlers, taking 4 for 29.



SULTAN POWERS KCA

Sultan Ali struck a sizzling 68 off 41 to steer KCA Deutag to a thumping 87-run victory against

Mazoon Dairy Company in an F Division game at OAC 3 ground in Seeb.

KCA Deutag collected 184 for

6 in 20 overs which Mazoon Dairy failed to match, getting dismissed for a meagre 97 in 15.4 overs. Sultan bagged 2-9.

AHMED'S CENTURY LIFTS ISRAR GHALA

In another F Division clash, Ahmed Tahir's splendid 101 off 54 powered Israr Ghala to a solid 90-run victory against Muscat Young Stars at OAC 3 ground.

Ahmed's century was the highlight of Israr Ghala's 210 for 2 that also included Amir Munir's 59 and Muhammed Saqib's 19-ball 38. Makhdoom Mufti (3 for 21) and Saqib (2 for 19) bowled exceptionally well with the new ball as Young Stars could manage to reach only 120 for 8. Adhithiya Madhav top-scored with 33.

BRIEF SCORES

Women's League T20

Muscat Women 125 for 5 in 20 overs (Amanda Dcosta 38 not out - 2x4, Kashish Deep 21 - 3x4. Sameera Khan 2-24) lost to PSM Women 127 for 1 in 12.3 overs (Fiza Javed 50 not out -

4x4, Hina Javed 32 - 4x4) by 9 wickets.

E DIVISION

Sketch International 168 for 5 in 20 overs (Yusuf Patanwala 75 - 6x1, 1x6, Mohammed Wasim 2-18) lost to Denmark CT 171 for 3 in 17.5 overs (Lal Shankarlal 61 - 9x4, Doresh Devender 50 - 7x4, Mohammed Wasim 37 - 4x4. Huzefa Sodawala 2-17) by 7 wickets. Sam Royals 179 for 8 in 20 overs (Arjun Rajesh 119 - 17x4, Ritesh Lad 3-43, Krishna Kydesi 2-19) beat Landmark Group 150 for 9 in 20 overs (Mohamed Farzan 34 - 8x4, Nilesh Shantaram 26 - 2x4, Sheheel Abdu 4-29, Shejeer Abdul 2-21, Sathisha Gundu 2-24) by 29 runs.

F DIVISION

KCA Deutag 184 for 6 in 20 overs (Sultan Ali 68 - 7x4, 3x6, Khalid Balushi 32 - 3x4, Saief Udden 3-38) trounced Mazoon Dairy Company 97 all out in 15.4 overs (Peter Shipin 28 - 1x4, Sultan Ali 2-9, Haneef Muhammed 2-12, Khalid Balushi 2-15, Arif Al Balushi 2-25) by 87 runs.

F DIVISION

Israr Ghala 210 for 2 in 20 overs (Ahmed Tahir 101 - 16x4, 2x6, Amir Munir 59 - 8x4, Muhammad Saqib 38 - 7x4) thrashed Muscat Young Stars 120 for 8 in 20 overs (Adhithiya Madhav 33 - 4x4, Prathiesh Hema 25 - 2x4, Mukhdoom Mufti 3-21, Muhammed Saqib 2-19) by 90 runs.



Ahli Sidab and Nizwa players in action at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. – Mohammed Mahjoub

SOHAR EDGE PAST MAJEES

AL NASR TOP GROUP 2, AHLI SIDAB CONTINUE GOAL SPREE IN HM CUP

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Sohar posted a thrilling 3-2 win against Majees in their first match of the His Majesty's Cup hockey championship preliminary round at the Sohar Sports Complex on Tuesday.

It was Mohammed Adil who struck the first goal of the match for Majees inside the first 10 minutes through a penalty corner. Majees were ahead in the quarter by 1-0.

Sohar came back with a stunning field goal by Samir Hulaish in the 22nd minute and the score remained 1-1 at the half-time break.

Sohar continued the good work and Omar Mubarak's good strike put them ahead for the first time in the match in the 35th minute.

Four minutes later, Majees pulled level by successfully converting a penalty corner to make it 2-2.

The score remained the same until the last three minutes of the match and Muhannad Darwish broke the Majees hearts in the 57th minute.

Darwish was clinical in his shot to slot home from a penalty corner.

The win gave Sohar crucial three points in the group while Majees have three points after they won against Salam 4-3 in their first match of Group 1.

HM Cup preliminary round results

Sohar bt Majees	3-2
Ahli Sidab bt Bashayer	13-0
Al Nasr bt Al Ittihad	5-0
Muscat drew with Bashayer	1-1
Al Nasr bt Salalah	4-0
Ahli Sidab bt Nizwa	8-0
Seeb bt Qurayat	4-0
Dhofar handed	2-0 win over Al Ittihad
Majees bt Al Salam	4-3

Fifteen teams are taking part in the 50th edition of the showpiece hockey championship. All the teams were distributed to four groups according to the geographic location. Group 1 clubbed Batinah teams including

Majees, Al Salam, Sohar and Al Suwaiq.

Title holders Al Nasr are in Group 2 specified for Dhofar Governorate teams. Other teams in the group include Al Ittihad, Dhofar and Salalah.

The runners-up of the last edition, Ahli Sidab, lead the Group 3 which also features Al Bashayer, Nizwa and Muscat.

The third and fourth groups are mixture of clubs based in Muscat and Al Dakhiliyah. The Group 4 comprises Seeb, Bausher and Qurayat clubs.

HOLDERS AI NASR IN FRONT

In Group 2, Dhofar were awarded 2-0 win over Al Ittihad who had failed to turn up for the match.

Holders Al Nasr began their campaign with an impressive 4-0 win over Salalah and in the second round thumped Al Ittihad 5-0 to become the first team to register two straight wins.

In Group 3, Ahli Sidab pummelled Nizwa 8-0, while Muscat and Al Bashayer were locked 1-1.

Ahli Sidab returned in the second round to register to another huge-margin victory after sinking Bashayer 13-0.

In Group 4, Seeb started with a 4-0 thrashing of Qurayat to pocket their winning points.

The group matches will be played in two stages — home and away. The top teams in the group will move to the finals that will take place at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The finals round will start on February 18 until March first week. The exact date of the final will be announced later.

22 clubs to compete at Oman Women's Futsal League

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

As many as 22 clubs confirmed their participation at the Oman Women's Futsal League set to begin in March.

According to the Oman Football Association (OFA) announcement on its twitter account, the teams which will participate in the 2020-21 season of the league will feature Salalah, Yanqul, Ahli Sidab, Al Oruba, Al Suwaiq, Sohar, Al Taliea, Mirbat, Al Ittifaq, A Nasr, Al Nahda, Al Bashayer, Ibri, Saham, Al Khabourah, Al Shabab, Al Ittihad,

Muscat, Oman club, Bahla, Qurayat and Al Kamil W'al Wafi.

The league is scheduled to begin in March while the exact dates of the matches and the other details will be unveiled very soon.

The domestic women futsal league event will be followed by another similar major tournament which will be dedicated for the universities, colleges and companies. The second tournament will take place in May. The OFA will aim from the above events to select the top potential faces for establishment of the first national women's football team.



In last June, the OFA had appointed Syrian coach Maha Jonoud as the head coach of the first national women's team. Jonoud, former head of Syrian Women's Football Department at Syrian Football Association (SFA), will supervise both the events. Also, OFA will take the opportunity from both events to introduce the new women Omani referees, coaches and administration staff. Also, many training sessions will be organised apart from the events to develop more qualified women footballers.

Al Ittifaq club were the

champions of the last edition of the Oman Women's Futsal League as they had blanked Sultan Qaboos University team 5-0 in the final match in March 2020. Al Suwaiq had claimed the third place as they had beaten Fanja 3-2 in the third/fourth place play-off.

The OFA had launched the first edition of Women's Futsal League in 2019-20 season. Thirty teams and 16 clubs took part in the league. In 2016, the inaugural edition of women's football tournament had been organised and eight teams took part in the event representing different organisations and clubs.

We are Proud to be The First Bank in the World to Provide Cardless ATM Services through BankDhofar ATMs using mobile number

Customers may conduct ATM transactions using their mobile number only.

The service is highly secured.

Cardless ATM Services is an extension of Cardless Cash service in BankDhofar's Mobile Banking App.

For more information
www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/ATM_CDM.aspx

BankDhofar

Oman to set up National Energy Efficiency Centre

KEY GOAL: Nama Group tasked with drafting framework for pilot phase of proposed nodal agency to oversee national energy efficiency and conservation efforts

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A first-of-its-kind institution dedicated to advancing energy conservation and energy efficiency as strategic national objectives is on the anvil in the Sultanate.

Initial responsibility for conceptualising the mandate of this central body has been given to Nama Group (The Electricity Holding Company), the state-owned holding company of government-owned electricity generation, transmission and distribution assets.

An announcement to this effect was made by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, at the Energy Efficiency Conference hosted by OQ, the Sultanate's integrated energy group, last week.

"By the middle of this year, we should have a framework in place for establishing an Oman

Energy Efficiency Centre," said Al Aufi. "Nama Group is presently putting this framework together. We will know by mid-year what the mandate of the centre is, how it will work, and so on. This framework is for the pilot phase of the initiative, covering a period of one to one-and-half years. We will then move into Phase 2, and decide the best place for the Energy Efficiency Centre to be set up."

Plans for the establishment of a centralised agency to drive energy efficiency align with the Omani government's efforts to advance energy conservation, together with renewable energy development and carbon reduction objectives, as part of national policy.

These goals are enshrined in the Medium Term Fiscal Sustainability Plan, covering the 2020 – 2025 timeframe, as well as the longer-term Oman 2040 Vision.

But far from just being an advisory services think-tank, the proposed centre will oversee the broad spectrum of issues encompassing energy efficiency and conservation.

"As part of its mandate, the centre will establish baselines and targets for energy efficiency improvement, qualification and certification of Energy Efficiency



It will also set standards and specifications regulating the import of household and electrical appliances based on their energy consumption, so consumers know what they are buying from the energy efficiency standpoint, and so on

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFİ
Under-Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Officers and Auditors, and so on.

It will also set standards and specifications regulating the import of household and electrical



appliances based on their energy consumption, so consumers know what they are buying from the energy efficiency standpoint, and so on.

In effect, the centre's job goes beyond recommending policies and procedures, but will also set

challenging baselines and targets," the Under-Secretary explained.

Also at the conference, Al Aufi underlined plans for the introduction of new guidelines mandating the appointment of dedicated Energy Efficiency Officers (EEOs) for organisations that are large consumers of electricity.

Candidates for these positions must be suitably qualified and duly accredited by the proposed National Energy Efficiency Centre when it is operational.

The principal remit of the EEOs is to improve energy efficiency in their respective organisations based on specific annual targets. Also on the cards is a proposal for the introduction of a credit system – broadly based on the international carbon credit model – to incentivise energy efficiency efforts in the Sultanate.

Under the proposal, a company or organisation that has achieved certifiable gains in lowering its consumption beyond an agreed target can convert these gains into credits.

These credits can be traded with, or sold to, those that fail to meet their reduction targets – thus creating a marketplace for trading in Energy Efficiency credits similar to carbon credit trading, the Under-Secretary said.

Move to enhance Al Mazyunah Free Zone's investment appeal

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), with top officials of the Wilayat of Al Mazyunah, to consider solutions to challenges faced investors and entrepreneurs in making the most of the facilities offered by Al Mazyuna Free Zone in Dhofar Governorate.

Present at the meeting were Shaikh Bakhit bin Salem al Maashani, Wali of Al Mazyunah Wilayat, and Shaikh Ahmed bin Saeed bin Hassan Zabanut, Majlis Ash'shura member representing the wilayat.

The discussions covered a range of issues aimed at facilitating investment, trade and commerce through the free zone straddling Oman's border with Yemen.

Officials also stressed the need for enhancing job creation for locals and making the local environment more conducive for trade and investment flows.

Local representatives called for setting up facilities providing basic services to truckers ferrying goods on



The discussions covered a range of issues aimed at facilitating investment, trade and commerce through the free zone straddling Oman's border with Yemen

the lengthy road leading to and from the free zone.

Another proposal mooted the establishment of incubator facilities for entrepreneurs as part of Madayn's services to

the business community.

The delegation later visited the Dry Port operated by Al Madina Logistics Company within the free zone.

The Dry Port commenced operations last June, providing a range of services including the handling of containers, refrigerated containers, and incoming and outgoing consignments which are re-exported through the free zone.

Inspection, clearance, handling and release

operations are also undertaken at assigned inspection areas at the dry port.

A full-fledged Customs Office is also located within the dry port. Madayn CEO was later briefed about key infrastructure improvement underway and planned at the free zone.

He also met with local business representatives to hear their views on developing the free zone as a hub for trade and investment.

Oman oil price rises \$1.79/barrel

MUSCAT: Oman oil price yesterday reached \$56.89, a rise by \$1.79. The average price of Oman oil (February delivery 2021) has stabilised at \$50 per barrel, thus \$6.17 higher than that of January 2021. — ONA

Extension of Tender Date

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers in the following Tender

NO	Tender Ref	Tender Title	Tender Fee OMR
1	2021/004	Digital Printing Services	RO 25/-
2	2021/006	Translation and Copywriting Services	RO 25/-
3	2021/007	Photography & Videography Services	RO 25/-
4	2021/008	Offset Printing Services	RO 25/-

Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Tuesday 19/01/2021 until 4:00 pm on Monday 15/02/2021.

Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name	Sohar Industrial Port Co
Account Number	3101-007970-500
Bank Name	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br
SWIT	OMABOMRXXXX
Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted	

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents
- Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents

All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address: sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic tender documents

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the below procedure is still valid as of today for the submission of the bids. If the current situation remains until the date of submission, tenderers will receive a circular with clear steps and procedures on the submission protocol.

The Technical and Commercial proposals must be in separate, sealed envelopes marked "Technical and Commercial" addressed to:

SOHAR Port and Freezone
Secretary of Tender committee
Tender Reference No. 2020/0219
Tender Name

The exterior of the sealed envelope shall not reveal the identity of the tenderer!

- The sealed tender envelope should be deposited in the tender box at the reception desk of SOHAR Port Administration Building before 4:00pm on Monday, 1/03/2021
- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SMEs are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents
- For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to : sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

soharportandfreezone.com

London financial district plans to lure in small firms

The City of London Corporation has pledged to ‘reinvent itself’ by encouraging small businesses and artists to ‘re-enter the city centre’, as the capital attempts to shake off the economic damage caused by the relentless increase of Covid-19.

In a five-year target to reinvigorate London, the Corporation has drawn up plans to motivate small businesses and artists to return to the capital “by providing hives of affordable work space and access to basic infrastructure.”

The Corporation said it wants a fifth of office tenants to be new to the Square Mile (the financial district) by 2025, while it vowed to increase weekend and evening visitors to the capital by 50 per cent over the next five years.

The plans are part of an attempt by the City to “reinvent

itself”, as the capital seeks to maintain its position as a world-leading business district in the wake of the pandemic.

Policy chair at the City of London Corporation, Catherine McGuinness, said: “London is today facing major challenges. Coronavirus, the UK has exited from the European Union and increasing protectionism across the globe are all threats to the capital’s role as an international business hub. We must reimagine London in order to seize the moment.”

The comments from McGuinness came after a Lords EU subcommittee report had warned, some while back, that London would be at risk of losing its footing as a global professional services hub.

The Lords report cautioned that Britain’s £225bn professional services industry had to be protected. City of London report



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

THE CORPORATION HAS DRAWN UP PLANS TO MOTIVATE SMALL BUSINESSES AND ARTISTS TO RETURN TO THE CAPITAL “BY PROVIDING HIVES OF AFFORDABLE WORK SPACE AND ACCESS TO BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE”

proposed boosting investment in tech firms to “ensure London’s future as the pre-eminent hub for financial services, professional services, and tech firms the world over”.

It suggested promoting the finance watchdog’s tech sandboxes, which allow firms to draw up software without being subject to usual regulator’s scrutiny, while also increasing the use of tech across different industries including legal services.

“Investment in London-based tech firms is on track to reach an all-time high, even while many of London’s small businesses face collapse,” the report said.

The City acknowledged some threat to the capital’s businesses posed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s orders to work from home where possible.

“As terrible a period as this is, we have seen how resilient and

innovative businesses, and their workers have been, adopting new ways of working and embedding technological change,” the report said. It came after City of London chair McGuinness said it was “absolutely critical that London moves as one in tackling this wretched virus and to keep the economy running as much as saving lives”.

She added: “A blanket recommendation to work from home risks stalling the capital’s recovery and damage long-term competitiveness. Hibernating through the winter is not an option for our economy.”

Hopefully by the end of winter the current vaccination programme will have made considerable difference.

Despite this uncertain and difficult backdrop, many investors are turning to property investment ahead of any looming recession.

Just over half of investors believe UK real estate is a sound investment regardless of Brexit and Covid-19.

Prospects for real estate and investment opportunities in the capital have seen particular improvement, according to a recent report from the Urban Land Institute. It described London as a “stalwart” and places London in second place across Europe’s major cities as a go-to destination for property investment.

Chief executive of FJP Investment, Jamie Johnson, said: “This is important – any attempt to stimulate investment and economic growth will be boosted by a vibrant property market. As such, it is vital for the government to implement policies that sustain this interest over the long-term.” *(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)*

LuLu opens new hypermarket in Salalah

MUSCAT: LuLu Group, the leading retail chain, further strengthened its presence in Salalah with the grand launch of its hypermarket located at the newly developed Salalah Grand Mall, which is the 26th branch in Oman and 199th globally.

The new store, which is spread over an area of about 100,000 square feet in a single level, was inaugurated with the support of government officials and the senior management of LuLu.

Speaking on the occasion, Yusuff Ali M A, Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Group, expressed his profound happiness and gratitude to the Government, Salalah Municipality and all the authorities for their whole-hearted support and hoped that Oman will continue in its path of development under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. “LuLu Group is committed to expanding its footprint across the Sultanate and is well on track to achieve its ambitious expansion plans with several new projects in Ruwi, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, and Samayil.

These projects are also a part of the Group’s commitment to



the community and will generate direct and in-direct employment opportunities within the local community”, he added.

Speaking on the launch of the new store, Ananth A V, Director

of LuLu Group – Oman & India, said, “We are excited about our association with Salalah Grand Mall for the value they bring into this project and appreciate the mall management for giving us the opportunity to be the anchor store.

While we are happy to increase our presence at Salalah, LuLu in Oman has very fond memories of Salalah from where we started our first store to having 26 stores today in the Sultanate with several more in the pipeline. This hypermarket is an important milestone in our quest to deliver quality products and a shopping experience that’s world-class.”

The new store is conveniently set up to offer residents the best of services coupled with value for money. “We are happy to give Salalah this new shopping landmark with a promise to provide a great experience. The offerings at the store have a fine mix of the local and the trending products, keeping the preference of the local populace in mind and we invite customers to shop with us and make the most of the unique offers,” said Shabeer K A, Regional Director, Oman.

PRESS RELEASE

BANK NIZWA POSTS REMARKABLE GROWTH IN 2020



Bank Nizwa has successfully achieved all set targets of its maiden 5-Year Plan (2016 – 2020) and now set on a growth path. Bank Nizwa was able to stand tall against all odds and record a significant growth and profitability in 2020. Showing remarkable progress year-after-year, Bank Nizwa has acknowledged the efforts of its Wholesale Banking Group, recognising it as a vital contributor to its success. An annual meeting was organised by the Wholesale Banking Group and was well-represented by the bank’s Management and Heads of divisions. At the event, the CEO addresses the bank’s aspirations and future plans while the event also highlighted the significant milestones achieved and introduction of unique products to portfolios.

HYUNDAI INTRODUCES ADVANCED HUMANOID ROBOT

Hyundai Motor Group has launched the “DAL-e,” a highly advanced customer service robot that independently communicates with people using precise recognition capabilities and mobility functions. The DAL-e is an acronym for “Drive you, Assist you, Link with you-experience.”

“The DAL-e is a next-generation service platform that can offer automated customer services anytime. It is expected to become a messenger capable of delivering consistent messages to customers in a more intimate and personal way than conventional robots,” said Dong Jin Hyun, Vice President and Head of the Robotics Lab at Hyundai Motor Group.



How do I prepare my organisation for Value-Added Tax?



NIRAV SHAH

With Value Added Tax (VAT) on the anvil of introduction in Oman, the most common question that a business owner or a financial controller of the company faces is “what is it that I should do to prepare for this new law and compliance requirements there under?”

What one often overlooks is that this could be an opportunity for some businesses to organise

themselves efficiently and also in some cases take advantage of this.

Going by the learnings from UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, it is very important to ensure implementation of VAT is prepared for in a systematic manner.

Firstly, one should engage in the implementation process with experienced professionals who on the basis of their past experiences can ably guide the organisation to avoid some of the common mistakes.

Engaging these experts will certainly smoothen out the complexities in the implementation process by ensuring an effective and well covered implementation which will help avoid penalties.

It is important to note that an organisation has to begin



with carrying out an impact assessment to assess the level of readiness required to get the organisation VAT ready.

An impact assessment would typically involve identifying and assessing the following:

- Business Processes and Cash flows: Every business process
- must identify their issues to work on to ensure successful VAT implementation.
- IT Systems: Analysis of IT systems to identify the changes that are required to be made to such systems.
- Transaction mapping: Impact of VAT introduction on all the

transactions taking place in the normal course of business.

Awareness sessions: Conducting awareness sessions to make the staff aware about the basic concepts of VAT.

An impact assessment is a foundation for the pre-implementation process. Pre-implementation process is a crucial step in ensuring that all the gaps identified in the impact assessment step are corrected.

Pre-implementation process generally consists of following and points mentioned below:

- Evaluating the impact of transitional provisions on the organisation.
- Preparation of VAT Compliance manuals.
- Evaluation of document formalities for VAT implementation.
- Contract Review: Review

the contracts entered into with customers/vendors from VAT perspective.

User Acceptance Testing: A test run of the IT systems after the IT systems have been changed and made ready for VAT.

Functional Training: All the functions like HR, Legal, IT, Finance, Sales, Procurement etc shall be trained

Accounting treatment: Accounts must evaluate accounting treatment on the various transactions due to VAT.

Such steps will help keep the organisation on track for a successful and effective VAT implementation.

Stay tuned for our further updates on VAT. [Nirav Shah is a Collaboration Partner with HC Shah Chartered Accountants (Oman) for VAT Advisory, Email: vat@hcsah.co]



Oil giant BP plunges into \$20.3 billion annual loss

The London-listed giant said the loss was driven by tumbling oil and gas prices, as well as significant impairments and exploration write-offs during a tumultuous year for the energy industry

LONDON: BP reported on Tuesday that it tumbled into a massive \$20.3 billion net loss last year, despite a slender fourth-quarter profit, as the coronavirus pandemic ravaged global energy demand.

The enormous loss contrasted sharply with net profit of \$4.0 billion in 2019, the British energy major said, adding that the oil sector had been “hit hard” by the Covid-19 crisis.

The London-listed giant said the loss was driven by tumbling oil and gas prices, as well as significant impairments and exploration write-offs during a tumultuous year for the energy industry.

However in the fourth quarter — the three months to December



BP's CEO Bernard Looney speaks during an event in central London, in this file photo. — Reuters

— net profit hit \$1.36 billion after the sale of BP's petrochemical business to privately-owned rival Neos for \$5.0 billion.

BP last year axed almost 10,000 jobs or 15 per cent of its global workforce and embarked upon major asset disposals after

the pandemic caused huge asset writedowns.

“2020 will forever be remembered for the pain and

2020 will forever be remembered for the pain and sadness caused by Covid-19. Lives were lost — livelihoods destroyed

BERNARD LOONEY
BP Chief Executive Officer

sadness caused by Covid-19. Lives were lost — livelihoods destroyed”, Chief Executive Bernard Looney said in a statement.

“Our sector was hit hard as well. Road and air travel are down, as are oil demand, prices and margins. It was also a pivotal year for the company. “We launched a net zero ambition, set a new strategy to become an integrated energy company and created an offshore wind business in the United States”, Looney said.

“We began reinventing BP —

with nearly 10,000 people leaving the company. We strengthened our finances — taking out costs and closing major divestments.”

Under Looney, who took over the reins at BP a year ago as the pandemic began taking hold worldwide, the group is looking to raise \$25 billion from asset sales by 2025.

After companies worldwide closed their doors and airlines grounded planes towards the end of last year's first quarter, oil prices dropped off a cliff, even turning negative at one point.

Prices then rebounded sharply and are currently trading above \$50 per barrel. Turning to the outlook, BP forecast an oil demand recovery this year but cautioned this would depend on vaccine rollouts and actions by governments and individuals worldwide.

“Oil demand is anticipated to recover in 2021. The speed and degree of the rebound depends on governments' policies and individuals' self-imposed actions as vaccine distribution proceeds”, BP said. — AFP



A man looks in the window of a estate agents in Hale, Britain. — Reuters

UK house prices fall for first time since June

LONDON: British house prices fell in January for the first time in seven months, before the scheduled March 31 end of a tax cut for buyers, mortgage lender Nationwide said.

House prices fell by a monthly 0.3 per cent, slowing the pace of their annual increase to 6.4 per cent from 7.3 per cent in December, which was their biggest jump in six years.

Economists polled by Reuters had expected a monthly increase of 0.3 per cent and a 6.9 per cent rise in annual terms.

— Reuters

WASHINGTON: As the White House and Congressional Democrats press for a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package that many Republicans say is more than what the country needs or can afford, Federal Reserve policymakers are also split on the issue.

“We are still in the teeth of this pandemic — and we are not out of the woods yet”, Dallas Fed President Robert Kaplan told the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in an online event.

He forecast, as vaccines get rolled out and more businesses can reopen, the US economy will likely grow about 5 per cent this year, enough to push unemployment down to 4.5 per cent, from 6.7 per cent in December.

That forecast, he said, assumes no further fiscal relief, except what may be needed to ensure there's enough money to vaccinate people and reopen schools, and for the unemployed to make ends meet — an amount he didn't quantify.

Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President Neel Kashkari, among the central bank's most dovish policymakers, had a more expansive view of fiscal relief, likening it to “wartime spending” and noting that the government



A man walks past Federal Reserve logo in Washington. — Reuters

has plenty of capacity for issuing debt to pay for it.

Kashkari also suggested he supports stimulus cheques, a key part of President Joe Biden's proposal opposed by Republican critics who contend that many who get the checks may not actually need them. Biden's \$1400 payments would come on top of the \$600 cheques in the package Congress passed in December, and the \$1200 cheques included in the first round of pandemic relief.

“It's very hard to design a government programme for

the whole US economy that is effectively targeted that doesn't leave lots of people out”, Kashkari told an online seminar held by Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

“The cheques are like spraying water against the fire: Sometimes you just need water.”

The United States has been devastated by Covid-19, with more than 26 million Americans infected so far, and more than 441,000 dying in total.

Despite strength in the housing sector and some other segments of the economy, the recession is

far from over. Some 18 million Americans are drawing on some form of unemployment insurance, many in hard-hit service industries like restaurants, travel and hotels.

Congress and the White House, not the Fed, will decide how much stimulus will be rolled out, but what is actually necessary remains a matter of heated debate.

West Virginia Governor Jim Justice, a Republican, said he supports more fiscal relief.

“If we actually throw away some money right now, so what”, he told CNN on Monday.

As vaccines get rolled out and more businesses can reopen, the US economy will likely grow about 5 per cent this year, enough to push unemployment down to 4.5 per cent, from 6.7 per cent

West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin, a Democrat, has said relief should be targeted to those who need it.

Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic summed up the general confusion.

“It is hard for me to say exactly what the right number is. There is so much uncertainty going on right now”, Bostic told CNBC.

“What I am looking at right now... is what is happening over the next six months, 12 months, and trying to get a sense of where businesses are, get a sense of how families are weathering the storm... and what we'll look like in the summer time when I am hopeful that so much of the vaccine will be through the population.” — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

NEW DELHI

India's gas, oil sales post slowest decline

India's diesel sales fell 2.3 per cent year-on-year in January, their slowest pace of decline in three months, preliminary data showed on Tuesday, indicating a gradual recovery in industrial growth in Asia's third-largest economy.

Local diesel sales by state-run refiners have been falling since March, when coronavirus-related restrictions slammed industrial activity and mobility. However demand for diesel saw a temporary year-on-year rise in October ahead of the country's



festival season.

Diesel consumption, a key indicator of economic growth which accounts for about 40 per cent of overall refined fuel sales in India, totalled 6.04 million tonnes in January. — AFP

ROME

Italian 4Q GDP decline less than forecast

Italy's economy shrunk at a slower-than-expected pace in the final three months of 2020 after robust growth in the previous quarter, data from the statistical office ISTAT showed on Tuesday.

Gross domestic product decreased a seasonally and calendar-adjusted 2.0 per cent from the third quarter, when output surged 16.0 per cent, which was revised from 15.9 per cent. Economists had forecast a 2.2 per cent fall.

The change is the result of a

decrease of value added in all main economic sectors including agriculture, forestry and fishing, industry and services.

On the demand side, negative contribution came from both the domestic component, which is the gross of change in inventories, and the net export component, the agency added. In the first and second quarters, the economy contracted 5.5 per cent and 13.0 per cent, respectively, due to the severe impact of the pandemic. — dpa

NEW YORK

AA employees told to brace for furlough warnings

American Airlines (AA) workers should brace for another round of furlough warnings as the airline expects to remain overstaffed on April 1, when US aid for industry workers expires, Chief Executive Doug Parker (pictured) said.

AA is among US airlines that received money from a \$15 billion payroll support package in December to protect workers' jobs and salaries through March, when the industry had hoped that pandemic-hit demand would have recovered with



vaccine rollouts.

“What hasn't happen is what we'd hoped would happen, that we'd get to April 1 and say oh my god... everybody we have were going to need them in the July schedule”, Parker said. — AFP

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

OMAN DAILY Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi 99641230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakhit Al Shihri 92996377
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

AG Al Maashari
99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri 99429192
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Sohar Office
Musalam Al Saidi 99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2021 | JUMADA AL THANIA 20, 1442 AH

OMAN DAILY
Observer

Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

FOR RENT

NEW family flats in Darsait near the beach, 5 bedrooms, hall with AC, 4 bathrooms, balcony with sea view, RO 450 per month. Contact: 99315986.

FLAT for rent in Maabela 3 master rooms. 96088926.

2 BHK and 3 BHK Flats for rent in Al Khuwair and Ruwi with good rent. Al Noor Commercial. 99339942, 24480487, 98403020.

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. 99322344.

FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call 91711118.

WELL maintained 1&2 BHK and office space/store available at Rex Road. Contact 92227165

NEW penthouse, N Ghubra — 2 bedroom + 3 toilets + 1 maid room with toilet and 1 big hall 99370300.

FLAT for rent at Al Khuwair 33, 4 bedrooms, majlis, 2 halls, kitchen and store. 99383446.

NEW apartment in Ruwi near church consists of 2 rooms with its facilities. Contact. 94664635, 95850345.

1BHK & 2 bkh flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. 93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

3 BHK Flat & studio flat in central Ruwi & 2 BHK in Medinat Al Ilam. Call 99238012/ 24704994.

3 BHK Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos. Good condition and common swimming pool and garden with good rent. Al Noor Commercial. 99339942, 24480487, 98403020.

SIT. WANTED

MECHANICAL engineer with 25 years water & wastewater, MEP designing experience, (10 years Government of Oman). Seeking suitable job. Contact: 99831723

SMART Indian, excellent English, Arabic speaker, 17 years Oman experience in Airport, Hospital, Media EPC seeks Admin/ Hr/ Project coordinator/ Operations. 99283938.

OMANI male, 17 years experience as driver. Looking for transporting job for nurses, office goers, sight seeing. Contact: 97947900.

EXPERIENCE in outdoor Sales & Operations with Oman driving license, looking for suitable job opportunities in Sales/ Operations. Mobile: 79857155.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male, experienced in estimation, tendering and post contracting, 32 years of total experience with 18 years of gulf experience, is seeking for a suitable placement. Having valid visa and driving licence. Ready to join immediately with necessary documents. Contact: 99437664

INDIAN Female Structural/Civil Engineer (B-Tech Civil), 18 years Gulf experience is seeking for suitable placement. Having valid visa and driving license. Ready to join immediately with necessary documents. Contact: 79858363.

SALES ENGINEER (PEB) B.Tech Mechanical with minimum 7 years of experience in Pre Engineered Steel Building (PEB) sales and marketing. Responsibility involves Technical discussion with the customers, preparing proposals, cost estimation and quotation. Valid GCC driving licence is a must. Contact: hrjob191@yahoo.com.

SALES/Marketing/ retail executive BMS in Marketing. 6 years experience. Contact 93920174. Rehankadri91@hotmail.com

MECHANICAL engineer, 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact 96511338. Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

A CONSULTANT construction engineer who supervised many construction projects, especially for the government, he has experience in tendering and project management, has a residence and driver licence. 96965100

FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, Projects, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact. 99884291 / 99741875 Email vipul70@gmail.com

YOUNG experienced Pakistani driver with Omani light vehicle driving licence seeks suitable opening. Speaks Arabic, Hindi, English and familiar with interior and Muscat areas. Contact GSM 95856719.

PROJECT MANAGER (B.Tech civil) with 8 years oman + 6 years India work Experience having valid visa & Driving License. Looking for job. Name: Syed. Contact: 79807002

CIVIL engineer/QS engineer, 11 years in UAE, freelance & Oman driving licence available, looking for full-time or part-time job 97299165.

THREE years experienced in administration / sales and marketing seeking placement. Omani D/L, and NOC available. Gsm- 98270993

ACCOUNTS MANAGER/ Chief Accountant, Indian male, 15 years of experience in Oman, UAE & India. Looking for a job and have NOC on visit. Contact. 79007124 / 78039524 Email: sheikcok@yahoo.com

SALES Manager I am interested in applying for any managerial positions — sales and distribution. I am a Sales Professional with 25 years' experience in Oman — FMCG (13 yrs), Small Domestic Appliance & Household products (12 yrs) — including 10 years in Sales Management. Currently working with a leading group's luxury and lifestyle division. NOC available. 99369127.

INDIAN driver with 10-year experience in sales, Rent A Car tours with own car needs suitable job. Well versed with Muscat routes in Oman and knowledge of Arabic English, Hindi, Malayalam. Kindly contact GSM 95037759

PROJECT MANAGER (B.Tech civil) with 8 years oman + 6 years India work experience. Having valid visa & Driving Licence. Looking for job. Name: Syed. Contact: 79807002

FOR SALE/RENT

COLD store in Al Seeb for lease or sale. Contact: 94272979, 96252664.

NEW 3 storey villas for sale/ rents Wadi Kabir/ Al Khuwair), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/ Wadi Kabir). 96596348.

INVESTMENT

AN organic jaggery (Al Harifayuh)1 manufacturing industry available for partnership or investment in Hubli India. 0091 9742421122.

BUYING

AL Awsad Modern llc, electronic and furniture used. 99834373.

We buy used and broken cars which have instalments in cash. 90202090.

ACC AVAILABLE

SINGLE room with attached bathroom and air-condition for executive bachelor, non-cooking, Wadi Kabir/ Al Falaj/ Ruwi High Street area. Contact 99657906

MANPOWER

MANPOWER from Philippines. Whatsapp: 91206344.

RENT A CAR

abc RENT A CAR
SPECIAL Rates on New Cars & 4 WDs RENTING & LEASING
Tours and Airport Transfer
Tel: 24582663 GSM: 95859497, Fax: 24582664, abcerent@omantel.net.om

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS

○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.
All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

FOR SALE OR LEASE

A STORE which can be made into a two-storey building, has a 350 sqm area. Contact 97811111.

FOR SALE

INSTITUTION Licence contact 95595512.

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) 99242445, 99327939.

SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketters**. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

1. AC maintenance and servicing. 2. Fridge, washing machine and dish washer repairing. 3. Painting and cleaning services. 4. Electrical, plumbing and carpentry work 97014234, 99447257, 24290686.

ORIENT Trading llc, Shampooing, sofa, carpet, floor polishing. Old house repairing. 99834373.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman



ACCOMODATION FOR RENT
Staff (20 Rooms) & Labour (36 Rooms) in Al Amerat with Kitchen and Dining Rooms. **Contact: 92878705/ 99374971**

WAREHOUSE FOR LEASE With Industrial License in Al Amerat (500-3000 Sqm Area)

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi 99641230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakhit Al Shihri 92996377
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadi.almashari@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri 99429192
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Sohar Office
Musalam Al Saidi 99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

RHC مركز الرسيل الصحي RUSAYL HEALTH CENTER



COVID - 19RT - PCR test
(Muscat region) Will be provided at **20.000** OR Within 6 to 8hrs

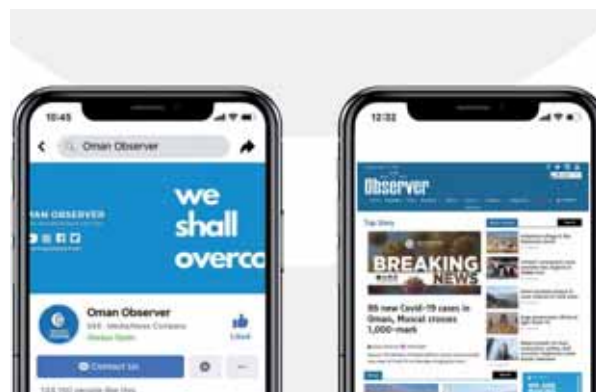
مختبرات لفحص فيروس كورونا
(محافظة مسقط) سعر الفحص **20.000** ريال عماني في غضون من 6 الى 8 ساعات

Working Days : 7 Days In A Week

أيام العمل : 7 ايام في الاسبوع

الموقع : مدخل الرسيل بجانب مبنى طبية
Taiba building - AlRusayl Industrial Estate

لتواصل والاستفسار :
Communication and Enquiries
+968 94429896
+968 24162332



Now get news on the go



To receive news updates from Oman Observer,

WhatsApp
<your name> to
96473232

features



Basking in the sun on Jabal Shams

A trip to the Grand Canyon of the Sultanate of Oman means enjoying the cool climate and scenic mountains of Jabal Shams — the highest point of the Hajar range located in the northeastern part of Oman. Here's why people continue to escape to this area especially during this time of the pandemic... **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

SCIENCE



BABIES FROM FAMED CARNIVOROUS DINOSAUR GROUP WERE 'BORN READY' TO HUNT

Scientists for the first time have found embryonic remains from the group of ferocious meat-eating dinosaurs that includes T. rex — fossilised jaw and claw bones that show these record-size babies looked a lot like adults and were "born ready" to hunt... **Story on Page 20**

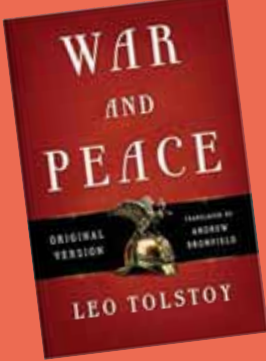
DISCOVERY



IN MEXICO, AMATEUR FIND OF ANCIENT 'GODDESS' STIRS CALLS FOR MORE RESEARCH

The edge of a mysterious block of limestone began to peak out from the dirt after Cesar Cabrera cleared a stretch of his family farm in Mexico where he wanted to plant watermelon... **Story on Page 19**

READ



WAR AND PEACE BY LEO TOLSTOY

The novel chronicles the French invasion of Russia and the impact of the Napoleonic era on Tsarist society through the stories of five Russian aristocratic families.

WILD LIFE



NICARAGUA OPERATION RESCUES TWO ENDANGERED JAGUAR CUBS

When a post on social media exposed animal traffickers who planned to illegally sell two young jaguars abroad, Nicaragua zookeeper Eduardo Sacasa had a narrow chance to save the cubs... **Story on Page 19**

ENTERTAINMENT



COACHELLA FESTIVAL SCRAPPED AGAIN AMID VIRUS FEARS

Organisers of the world-famous Coachella music festival, due to be held in April, have been forced to cancel the event because of coronavirus concerns, the second year in a row it has been shut down.



Basking in the sun on Jabal Shams

BY KABEER YOUSUF



Waking up to the rising sun on top of Jabal Shams or the Mountain of the Sun where the sun seems to be at a hand's stretch and basking in the salubrious sunlight is something one can look for during these days of pandemic. A trip to the Grand Canyon of the Sultanate of Oman is indeed something one can plan to venture out on a weekend.

The highest mountain of the Hajar range and the country, Jabal Shams is a vast range of mountains located in northeastern Oman north of the town of Al Hamra. Roughly around 3 hours' drive or slightly more, to the mountain which is widely known to be a popular sightseeing area is an 'out of the mundane' activities that both citizens and residents enjoy doing on weekends.

The dipping temperatures around this area is a perfect justification among all other reasons to pay a visit here. Although the highest peak is a restricted area for motorists, trekkers can climb up to the peak on foot in nearly 8 to 9 hours, the locals have said.

The second summit of Jabal Shams called the South Summit can be accessed by trekking or using a 4X4 trail and reach the second highest peak point of the mountain standing at some 2,997 metres height.

During this month, temperatures drop to as low as 10 and below standing at par with its neighbouring mountain Jabal Al

Akhdar, another prominent peak in this area.

MOUNTAINOUS AMBITION:

A group of Omani girls are seen making handicrafts and selling them to the visitors. Fatma, Khuloud, Shaikha and Nawal, some of the many educated girls who are taking their baby steps towards making their dreams come true. Their products range from handmade key-chains, bracelets and baggage tags to sandals for home and all the raw materials to make them are from the surroundings of the mountain including the hair of sheep and goats.

"These shops are built by our families for us to spend time making and selling these handicrafts to the visitors and at the end of the day, of course, some income for the family", said Shaikha, who graduated from Nizwa College of Applied Sciences.

CLIMATE:

December and January are the months known for lowest temperatures on the mountain while June and July report to have a rather hot climate and what makes these temperatures.

A host of places, Wadi Ghul — Oman's Grand Canyon, Misfat al Abriyeen, Bait al Safah, Jabal Yibir, Wadi Bani Ghaf and the villages showcasing their traditional Omani life along with various canyon adventures are a treat to the visitors and a perfect escapade from the world around.





find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



cardio__queen • Follow

Salalah, Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman



lela_djehuti • Follow

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque



appleinthesun.x • Follow

Oman



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



DISCOVERY

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.om



In Mexico, amateur find of ancient 'goddess' stirs calls for more research

The edge of a mysterious block of limestone began to peak out from the dirt after Cesar Cabrera cleared a stretch of his family farm in Mexico where he wanted to plant watermelon. Several weeks later, he and five other men carefully hoisted it out of the ground, and found themselves face to face with a

life-size statue that had likely been buried for centuries. The accidental archaeologists had made the country's first big find of the year. "Look! It's the image of a goddess!" said an overjoyed Cabrera, 52, recalling his first words after seeing her face. The farmers carefully lifted the statue into a truck and took it to Cabrera's house. Some

Internet sleuthing in the days that followed persuaded Cabrera that the statue, carved with elaborate ornaments and a flowing feather headdress, resembled the Huastec goddess of lust. Experts think it's more likely the more than 500-year-old sculpture represents an elite woman, possibly a queen, from the Huastec culture, one of Mexico's lesser-known ancient societies due in large part to a paucity of research plus wide-scale looting over a century ago of its uniquely naturalistic art. For centuries, thriving Huastec population centers dotted Mexico's steamy southeastern coast, many clustered around rivers that flow into the Gulf of Mexico, stretching across six modern-day Mexican states including Veracruz, Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosi. By the time Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes arrived on the Veracruz coast in 1519, they had for decades been absorbed into the Aztec empire, derided as drunks and overly sexual by the more proper imperial elites but valued as a crucial link to Gulf coast riches like cacao and especially fine cotton cloth. Portraying Huastecs as barbarians was probably a ploy to justify submission even as their artistic influence spread, according to historians. "The Gulf coast region really had one of the most remarkable sculptural traditions," said Kim Richter, a Huastec art expert at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. She says the tradition emphasised

powerful women, often tattooed and almost always nude. Many statues were looted in the late 1800s and early 1900s by British naval officers and oil industry geologists around the Gulf port of Tampico, Richter adds, which in part explains why the British Museum has such an extensive collection. Then as now, careful archaeological documentation was absent. "This amazing cultural heritage is not getting excavated and it's not being properly conserved," she said, noting that nearly all ongoing research in the region is so-called "salvage" work, legally required before bulldozers can clear land for development. Over the past couple of years, steep cuts to research funding in Mexico have forced many archaeological digs across the country to close. Sara Ladron de Guevara, dean of Veracruz University and herself an archaeologist, points to an appreciation of Huastec sculpture outside Mexico. She cited what she describes as a Venus of ancient Mexico, naked and curvy but headless, currently on display through July at the Quai Branly museum in Paris. She said the discovery of the Huastec 'goddess,' found by lucky locals rather than trained archaeologists, and awaiting her fate in storage at Cabrera's house, should send a message to Mexico's government. "I think this woman has come to remind us that we have a past to safeguard and heritage to investigate."—Reuters

WILD LIFE

Nicaragua operation rescues two endangered jaguar cubs



WHEN A POST on social media exposed animal traffickers who planned to illegally sell two young jaguars abroad, Nicaragua zoo-keeper Eduardo Sacasa had a narrow chance to save the cubs. The poachers — who had already killed the young cats' mother — were caught red-handed and agreed to hand the animals over, but under one condition. They demanded Sacasa, director of Nicaragua's National Zoo, meet them in the Daukura region and pick up the cubs without bringing any authorities along. So Sacasa flew to the Caribbean city of Bilwi, and then, with the help of four guides, travelled first by car and then up a river by boat to a village to meet the poachers and save the baby jaguars — one of the most endangered species in Nicaragua. "It's our passion to save these little animals that are in danger of extinction, they're killing them," he said upon return to the capital city of Managua with the felines, a female and a three-month-old male. "They're thin, they (the poachers) gave them cowhide to eat," Sacasa lamented. "They were going to sell them to a Chinese citizen after taking them to Honduras." He explained that lately there have been wild animals roaming through human communities after hurricanes Eta and Iota in November destroyed their habitats. The nervous little green-eyed predators on Wednesday arrived at the zoo south of Managua, where they will spend the next few days getting dewormed and undergoing medical examinations. According to Sacasa, jaguars are among the most endangered species in Nicaragua, along with the tapir. The zoo, which also houses an animal rescue center, is developing a breeding programme for jaguars, which can live up to 25 years in captivity, but often do not make it past 10 in the wild, due to habitat destruction and illegal hunting, Sacasa explained. In Nicaragua, jaguars, which are strong hunters capable of taking down even a crocodile in the water, mostly live in the forests along the Atlantic coast. Jaguars, or *Panthera onca*, are listed as "near threatened" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list of threatened species.—AFP



Scientists in Greece find 20 million year-old petrified tree

LESBOS, GREECE: Greek scientists on the volcanic island of Lesbos say they have found a rare fossilised tree whose branches and roots are still intact after 20 million years.

The tree was found during road-work near an ancient forest petrified millions of years ago on the eastern Mediterranean island and transported from the site using a special splint and metal platform.

It is the first time a tree has been found in such good condition complete with branches and roots since excavations began in 1995, said Professor Nikos Zouros of the Museum of Natural History of the Petrified Forest of Lesbos.

"It is a unique find," he said. "[It] is preserved in excellent condition and from studying the fossilised wood we will be able to identify the type of plant it comes from."

Lesbos' petrified forest, a 15,000-hectare, UNESCO-protected site, is the result of a volcanic eruption 20 million years ago which smothered the island's then sub-tropical forest ecosystem in lava.

The fossilised tree, about 19 metres long, was preserved by a thick layer of volcanic ash after it fell. A large number of fruit tree leaves were found in the same spot, adding to the picture along with animal bones from the general area.

"During the excavations the various forests that existed between 17 and 20 million years ago on Lesbos are being uncovered and we can reconstruct the ecosystem that existed during that period," said Zouros. — **Reuters**

Babies from famed carnivorous dinosaur group were 'born ready' to hunt



WASHINGTON: Scientists for the first time have found embryonic remains from the group of ferocious meat-eating dinosaurs that includes T. rex — fossilised jaw and claw bones that show these record-size babies looked a lot like adults and were "born ready" to hunt.

The fossils, the researchers said on Tuesday, represented two species from the group called tyrannosaurs, the apex predators in Asia and North America during the Cretaceous Period towards the end of the dinosaur age.

The bones indicated that these were bigger than any other known dinosaur babies — three feet (1 metre) long, or the size of a medium dog — and hatched from what must have been enormous eggs, perhaps exceeding the 17-inch (43-cm) length of the largest dinosaur eggs currently known.

The roughly 77 million-year-old jawbone, about 1.2 inches (3 cm) in length, was unearthed in Montana and may belong to a species called Daspletosaurus. The roughly 72 million-year-old wedge-shaped claw came from Canada's Alberta province and may belong to a species called Albertosaurus.

Both are slightly smaller cousins of Tyrannosaurus rex. The largest-known tyrannosaurs topped 40 feet (12 metres) long and 8 tonnes in weight.

The jaw possesses distinctive tyrannosaur traits, including a deep groove inside and a prominent chin.

University of Edinburgh paleontologist Greg Funston, lead author of the research published in the Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences, said the scientists were amazed at how similar the embryonic bones were to older juvenile and adult tyrannosaurs and noted that the jaws boasted functional teeth.

"So although we can't get a complete picture, what we can see looks very similar to the adults," Funston said.

It appears that tyrannosaurs, Funston added, were "born ready to hunt, already possessing some of the key adaptations that gave tyrannosaurs their powerful bites. So it's likely that they were capable of hunting fairly quickly after birth, but we need more fossils to tell exactly how fast that was." — **Reuters**



Scientists produce embryos in race to save northern white rhino from extinction

SCIENTISTS working to save the northern white rhino from extinction have produced two more embryos of the world's most endangered mammal, increasing the number of viable embryos produced so far to five.

There are no known living males and neither of the two remaining northern white rhinos on Earth — a mother and her daughter living in Kenya — can carry a calf to term.

Scientists hope to implant embryos made from the rhinos' egg cells and frozen sperm from deceased males into surrogate mothers from a more abundant rhino species.

The work of the BioRescue research team has been hampered by the coronavirus pandemic as international travel restrictions delayed some of its procedures.

"2020 was really a hard test for all of us, but giving up is not the mentality of any true scientist," BioRescue leader Thomas Hildebrandt from the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Germany said.

"Christmas gave us a present: two embryos. And we are extremely happy about that."

The five embryos are stored in liquid nitrogen at a laboratory in Cremona, in Italy's Lombardy region, waiting to be transferred into a surrogate mother.

The team hopes to be able to deliver its first northern white rhino calf in three years and a wider population in the next two decades.

"We are under time constraint because we want really a transfer of the social knowledge from the last existing northern white rhinos to a calf," Hildebrandt said.

The northern white rhino used to live in several countries in east and central Africa, but its numbers fell sharply due to poaching. — **Reuters**